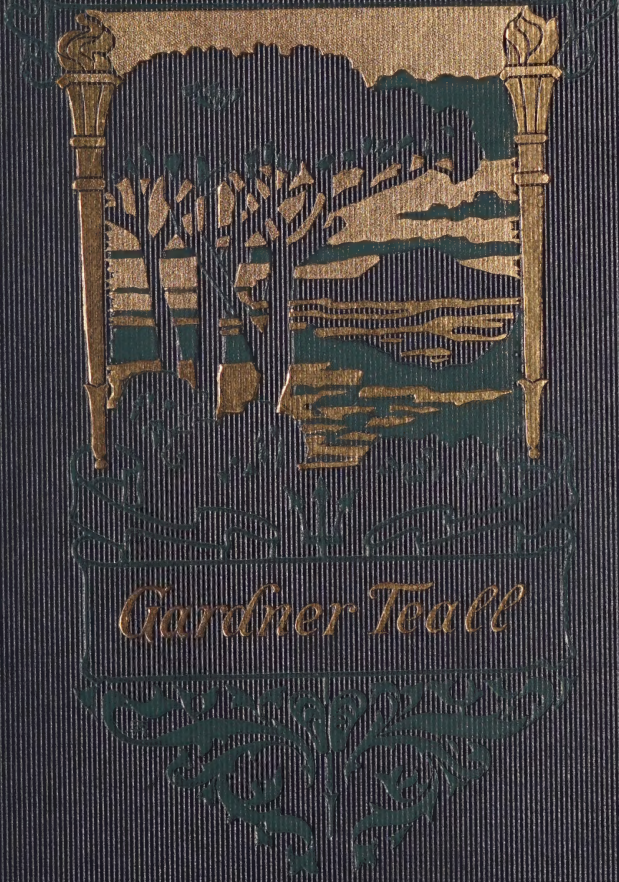
The Contessa's Sister



Gardner Teall

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A NOVEL

By Gardner Teall

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To My Mother

That my beautiful island

may be hers likewise

Mihi, Musis, et paucis amicis

The Contessa's Sister

I

I HAVE come down into my little garden to-day, for the scorching sun has been merciful, no longer blazing like an angry topaz in the crown of Heaven. Breasting an Italian summer in this dauntless fashion of my own choosing is a thing I would have smiled at a year ago, with the indulgent superiority of the sure schoolboy who feels certain of everything he has learned in his geography until Merope begrudgingly lets out a little of her endless thread, and the extremity of its tethering permits him to guess the futility of everything this side of his latest horizon.

Here can I sit in the vine-cast shade of Vincenzo's pet pergola — and hard, indeed, he worked to prove himself an architect! As far to the south as I can see, the waters of the Mediterranean are like an endless windwaft field of gentians. To-morrow everything will

be like the blue of a thousand sapphires, and the day after that, perhaps, the color of the Mary-flowers growing there in the *bosco*, high under wicked old Barbarossa's pirate stronghold, where I climbed for them yesterday at the risk of my neck, that I might have a handful to bring home with me.

Vincenzo and Luisa laughed at me for my pains, laughed at me when I put them in the vase old Morini had given me at Murano, for they knew what I have come to learn, — Mary-flowers grieve themselves to death when torn from their altitude, and sorrow as do the little flowers that nestle on the Alps.

But I am always finding out something, now from Vincenzo, and now from Luisa. Indeed I have just found out something, for I have been asking questions of Vincenzo.

"Ah, *signore mio*, but you have an eye!" (I do not deny it.) "It is the very lovely Contessa's most lovely sister. It is the truth, there is not another of such *bellezza*, such goodness, and such kind-to-the-poorness as the Contessa's sister. She is a saint, the most sainted one on the whole island."

Now I like the way in which Vincenzo refers to the whole island. It has a funny little fussy coast-line like the pinking on Luisa's sunbonnet. The whole noble number of its inhabitants is officially set down by a census-taker, who probably has n't anything else to do but amuse himself by expanding arithmetic. At least he has made so goodly a showing that I am incredulous. It may have taken a multitude to keep old Tiberius straight, but to-day we are a very orderly community, and for the life of me I cannot see where the census-taker found his population, — unless he counted in Neptune and the mermaids.

However, it is a fiction I rejoice in, never having any love for crowded areas, or any patience for those noisy persons who are wont to disparage Malthus. Even one square mile (to say nothing of the twelve one may find here by searching carefully) may often hold too many representatives of humanity, if Providence has been careless in the matter of selection. Still I do not hint of these things, either to Vincenzo or to Luisa, — I would not hurt their feelings for a world of peaceful vacuity, if only that I

have never seen two more clannish, sociable souls in all my life. Moreover, since yesterday, I have concluded that I must get about more. It is not well for one to become so intoxicated with his new surroundings, and the perfect restfulness of it all, that he succumbs to the bitterness of the *far niente*, which should always be sweetened, instead, with thought of the affairs of others. But my neighbors will guess what a lone bachelor has on his hands — unpacking and setting up housekeeping within six days' space; by and by I shall become sociable too. Just now it is good to feel that I shall not go far away for a long time to come, — that I can sit here in the sun and dream all the dreams I long to dream, with no one to bother, no one to think about it.

It is not often one finds a little house, a little garden, a little island, and every other happy thing, just to his mind in a little world that he may make his own. But the very moment I looked over the low wall that separates this little heaven in my new-found paradise from all the other little heavens, I knew such happiness was to be mine. That is why I waited

two long months, waited with the sort of patience that plays almost a havoc of rhapsodies on the strings of taut-strung nerves, fearful that I might lose all that I had come to hope should be mine, — an inn, as it were, for mine ease.

First came an interminable bargain with the broken-down Neapolitan marchese — Heaven save his soul, for his virtues never can! I doubt if the villain had ever stepped one of his buff-gaitered, pointed, tan boots on so much as a flagstone of this courtyard, which came to be his through the marriage settlement. If ever he haggled over the dowry terms as he bickered over one lira's worth of difference with me, God have pity on the poor lady's education in matters of the heart, and grant that her father was a clever financier! Whether or not the poor lady died of heartbreak I do not know for a certainty, though I take it from Luisa as a foregone conclusion, and she is somewhat authoritative on such matters. However, I do know that the dower went the way of the wasteful, and that the signore Marchese found himself forced to sell his villa in order to keep

up the quality of the wine he drank, and the quantity of friends he invited to help him drink it.

Knowing nothing about his circumstances (caring less, so long as I might have the villa), one springtime afternoon found us all sitting around a little table at Gambrini's, sipping coffee as black as the Styx, — the signore Avvocato, who arranged the matter, the signore Marchese, who now and then threatened to upset it, and the signore Myself, quivering with hope. Never a suspicion had I that the old villain was down to the very last soldo in his very last jeans. The whole piazza of San Ferdinando knew it, the proprietor knew it, the waiter knew it, the Avvocato knew it, but alas, on account of having been born in a democratic country, I supposed the attention he attracted was occasioned by the position in life I had been led to believe the Marchese held. It was not until after I had the whole story from Vincenzo, supplemented by Luisa's invaluable data (she had known the poor lady), that I realized what a scamp I had been treating with. Therefore I took another trip to

Naples in all haste, and paid another visit to another advocate, just to be certain that everything was all right. Miraculously it was. So here I find myself in a little haven which harbors my storm-tossed ship after all, and I have always in my heart the song of the island,

Vide 'o mare quant' è bello!

For never does the sea seem more bright and lovely than here it does, — never before did life seem so worth beginning the right way at last, after all the years of not having lived at all.

I suppose, that first day when I took the *funicolare* up the hillside, and found myself tumbled out on the village piazza, there lurked within me a mischievous pleasure at being instantly mistaken for a prowling *forestiere* bent on a square meal at the Quisisana, and an after-rush for the Grotta Azzura, to depart the same afternoon by the little *vaporetto* for Sorrento or Naples, whichever place might be the *ultima Thule* of the jaunting tourist, who prides himself on having done so much in a day. Not a single person on the

little piazza guessed that in me he beheld the new master of Villa Giacinto, over there on the hillside, always just showing its fair profile, more beautiful than any Greek's, and blessed with the fairest garden on the Via Tragara.

It was then that Vincenzo, great, strong, honest Vincenzo, rushed up with a hundred apologies for his unworthiness even to accept the ready forgiveness of his indulgent padrone. After him came Luisa, panting explanations, — the chimney had been smoking, they did not dare leave until they investigated, — it was nothing; indeed, Vincenzo explained, it had been their careful imaginations. Luisa was sure of it, and so, to the amazement of every one, I departed on foot through the arch of the market-place, accompanied by the clattering of a hundred little wooden shoes that kept pace with the curiosity of those dear, crowding *bambini*, who, when I turned around to smile at them, shyly whispered "*Benvenuto!*" — "Welcome" indeed! And I had to chide Vincenzo for scolding them, but he took the rebuke patiently enough, showing how

early he appreciated the fact that I might have to be humored now and then. Luisa, too, was delighted.

I suppose the wind which now brings me the savory scent of all the things that are cooking in Luisa's kitchen reminds me again of all the wonderful dishes she placed before my undeserving palate! Never shall I forget the *pranzo* of that evening. It solved the mystery of Luisa's delay, and those oranges, the secret of Vincenzo's *fritto misto* — mysterious fritter! Where in all Christendom, or in Pagan land either, will you find a cook like your Caprese cook, a dish like her *fritto misto?* I gorged myself into a day's illness, but Luisa has never guessed it — it would have broken her heart. So I laid it to a malady as mysterious as the *fritto* (of the imagination, in fact), but ingeniously convenient for another time, either to excuse gastronomic indiscretion, or to escape some delicacy like certain octopian condiments which once I unwittingly devoured in Venice, and which have remained ghosts to my appetite ever since. I shall never forget. It was at Florio's.

"Quale è il nome di questo piatto delicioso, Carlo?" I had inquired of the waiter.

"Pesce di diabolo, signore," he answered, as though it were an ordinary matter, "Octopus." And with a rereading of Victor Hugo fresh in mind it speaks well for my manners that I did not go mad on the spot. However, I do not think Luisa will feed me with octopi. As a precaution, however, I shall warn her against it.

The next day was when I saw the Contessa's sister. I do not even know the Contessa. She, too, is very beautiful. I have asked Luisa about them both. I passed their palazzo on my way to the post-office. It is not often that the great gray walls of a palace of yesterday exhale the fragrance of to-day's jasmine, but they did, so I looked up just in time to see a lady (as lovely as any Raphael knew) at the window with her arms billowed in oceans of delicious flowers, which she and the other were putting in vases of glass. They did not look down. Luisa says it is well, for staring up at windows is not a custom of the country. As she is my authority on insular etiquette, I

stand rebuked; yet feel that she might, after all, give me a little more time to become accustomed to the ways of the land. But I am glad I know the way to the post-office. I shall go myself every day.

And I shall always find letters. There always are, when a chap without a penny suddenly finds himself overtaken by the tidal wave of affluence, blown by the winds of a propitious legacy from some forgotten next of kin. It is surprising, then, how quickly the news travels, and how it whets the edge of correspondence. You suddenly begin to hear from people who have been forgetting you all these struggling years, and from others you had been forgetting. You will have had no idea that so many dormant memories have continued to be hugely interested in your welfare. Some even refer to it as your success, though that seems a bit blunt and over-frank in associating the good fortune made possible by the misfortune that carried your benefactor hence from this sphere of surprises.

However, instead of any pronounced misgivings, or annoyance, I take it all as rather

amusing. In fact, I feel friendly toward the whole lot. There is no reason they should have bothered with me before, anyway. Even my great-uncle Rufus did n't. Indeed, I myself had come quite to forget there was any such person until the astonishing news I received from Sult, his lawyer.

Sincerity? Well, you are so much a man of the world by this time that you catch yourself realizing a thing or two about the little black border you have put around your letter-paper, for the time being, and if it is a token of respect to the memory of the prosperous departed one whom you never saw, never knew, and never loved, a pompous, selfish, wicked old person who had freighted the first argosy of his fortunes with what he had stolen from your grandfather, it is also a token of the joy of knowing where your next meal is coming from every day in the year without your drudging for it. So you decide if ever you lift the covers of your board to the letter-writers who have discovered you, they will find your platters well laden with *fritto misto*, not dampened with the nothingness of sour old Timon's recipe.

Indeed you rejoice that, at last, Life has brought the full charity of living into your soul. You suddenly find that you bear no man a grudge.

You think of all these things while you are busy at home putting the finishing touches to your traps that, for three days, have been strewn around the place to the despair of Luisa, who cannot understand your dropping everything, just to run out on the terrace, every little while, for a look at the sea, and cannot yet understand why you come back to dance a tarantella with yourself through the very chaos of your disorder. She is pleased, nevertheless, and so is Vincenzo. To-day they both helped to fix my sleeping-chamber. The stuffy old bed has been taken down, and a hammock slung in its place. Vincenzo is all for the hammock, but Luisa says it will give me a crooked back, and that it is a heathen invention of the Evil One, who ran the funicular up the hillside, doing great damage to the orchard of Don Enrico.

At first I am not interested, but Luisa drops a hint that Don Enrico is the uncle of the Con-

tessa's sister. So, with a Don as an uncle, I cannot but feel that the saintship of the niece is hereditary, and, therefore, a matter of importance. Unworthy as I know I am, it may happen, some lucky day, that I shall find myself in her presence, even allowed to mix with the circle of sanctity, and so I force myself to become interested.

Anyway, nothing bothers me to-day. June here is as lovely to me as the Januaries with which they attempt to allure travelers; so, having nothing else to do, I have come down into my little garden. Overhead the turquoise skies are already lending their cool colorfulness to the sun that is creeping behind San Michele, and the breezes that have begun to stir seem to breathe the breath of the jasmine flower.

II

THERE below me spread the waters of the sea, stretching forth in a glossy reach from the very rocks under my craggy terrace to the African coast. I can only guess that it lies there, far beyond all vision. From my pergola seat I look down on a ruined old monastery. Luisa says it has six hundred rooms, thirty staircases, three subterranean passages, and two centuries of ghostly memories. Anyway I am for exploring it, though Vincenzo, with unsolicited discretion, tells me we shall have to ask the signore Capitano of the carbinieri about it first, which is rather stupid — I like to pounce down on ruins all by myself.

Though Vincenzo listens respectfully to all my enthusiasms, he pretends dismay at this one, and while admitting the possibility of crawling over the wall, he insists that any such proceeding would be disrespectful to the signore Capitano's prerogative of holding the key to the gateway, through which a little fee

("such a little fee, signore," he will say) will enable the less privileged to pass authoritatively. Perhaps, if there is nothing else to do, the signore Capitano will send precious near a regiment along to give the place an air of being inhabited, and as I shall sit there, puffing a cigarette (with utter occidental disregard for the prejudices of my Salem ancestors), or shall concern myself with the curious well-curb of the glorious old courtyard, perhaps they will execute manœuvres for my delectation and *denari*, or solemnly stand guard over the thirty staircases, while I am exploring the six hundred cells, or losing myself in the three subterranean passages.

"I shall speak to the signore Capitano myself, for my padrone," Vincenzo ventures.

"Grazie, Vincenzo," I reply, "va bene."

Now I am proud of my Italian, and Vincenzo knows it. I have told him he should be grateful that I understand everything *he* says, and so, out of all decency, he should try to return the compliment. Nevertheless it is Luisa who helps me with the *dialetto*. In Florence I got on famously. Indeed so famously that I

never quite understood why I did not instantly pass as a Tuscan, instead of being as instantly set down an American. Not that my patriotism was unflattered, but, on the other hand, my vanity suffered. I suppose I should feel the same way in Stockholm if I were not taken for a Swede. But there is one consolation, — I have red hair.

I shall never forget how the affable Marchese suggested that if, perhaps, I did not speak his mother tongue with just his own exquisite readiness, at least, had he not been told otherwise, he would assuredly have taken me for a Nolan. I afterwards found out that of Nola's thousand inhabitants ten hundred of them, by popular report, are said to be thieves, and the rest light-fingered. Thus stingeth the sting of treachery, and mocketh the mockery of a marchese.

When, some time, I shall take a little journey from this Rose of the Mediterranean to peep again at the lovely Lily of the Arno, I know, then, Don Ubaldo, my good old Florentine gossip, will chide me for deserting the fair flower of the Tuscan *lingua* for the jargon of

my southern isle. Well, I shall draw myself up then, proudly, and tell him that if I say *ucchiuzzi neri* instead of *occhi neri*, the eyes of a southern maid are just as black as any that peep out from the casements under the hill of San Miniato! Of course I shall only say this to tease the signorina Giulietta, who will be standing by, — not that she cares a lettuce-leaf about me, but because there has always been a standing quarrel between us about my little island, which she disdains (though she has never seen it) and the fickleness of the Florentines, an assumption upon my part which she vehemently denies. I should lose all faith in her if she did not, for she is the soul of truth. When I speak of the red roses of the South she hums a little Tuscan tune that has come down from Messer Ottavio Rinuccini's time, for she knows I will recollect its silly little verses about the white lilies of the Arno.

That I might have been living in Florence is true, as signorina Giulietta reminds me, and indeed I almost wonder what courage took me so far from the singing of those rippling waters of the Val d' Arno, to find myself here

on the very Isle of the Sirens, by which, once, the exemplary Ulysses passed, though with a sigh, as he looked back with memories of his heart's delight. But I looked a bit about Settignano, where Bennett's perfect villa is the arena of the learned, who foregather there to deny Sandro Botticelli the *Bella Simonetta*, and imagine they are generous in bestowing on Ortolano something the failing brush of Garofalo had cast aside in despair. Yet lovely as it is, nestling there on its hill-top, I could never have been rid of the sadness of thinking of a certain little *casa* set in a tiny hillside farm there. It is thorn-grown with the pale roses of yesterday, which only live to tell of the sorrow of the sweet lady, whose broken heart but added another theme to a poet's *rime*. He still lives across the way. Moreover his dogs bark dismally night and day; — so I came down into the valley again, heavy-hearted, hearing only the song of a wounded thrush by the wayside.

If it was different with Fiesole, they would neither permit me to pitch tent in the old arena there, nor let me take up the offending

car-tracks that would bring hordes of the unappreciative curious right to the very front door of the *vita nuova* I sought. So that, too, was impossible.

As for the heart of the city itself, I suppose I felt I might succumb, some day, to the mad impulse of trying to take Giotto's tower home with me, of tucking good Sandro's poem of springtime under my arm, or of being tempted beyond the bounds of safety to abstract the precious manuscript of Messer Petrarco's *Canzone*, there in the Laurentian Library, where my friend Bacci lets me have a look at it now and then. He tells me no one else guesses it is there, or would bother to come and see it if he did. I should probably compound my felony by trying to bribe him into accepting the post of librarian of my own collection, for I happen to have a *Codex Dantesca*, utterly unknown to even the good Don Ubaldo, and I almost feel certain the joy of its unique guardianship would go far with friend Bacci.

So it were better, instead, that Florence should be but the Mecca of my pilgrimages,—

the soil of my roof-tree this island, found one beautiful day last spring when the tumultuously turbulent tide of a rebellious bay tossed me from the arms of Naples into its hospitable lap. I shall never forget that I had been on the very point of being angry with myself at having been persuaded by the enthusiastic English lady and her extremely disagreeable husband to board the *vaporetto*, under the assurance that, otherwise, I would surely be missing something, for the *piccolo giro* was put down by Herr Baedeker as one of the wonders of the world.

The trip was abominable. Just off Sorrento, we hovered to take on the travelers who bobbed about below in treacherous little boats that groaned with the hysterical attempts of their passengers to make themselves believe they would not go to the bottom. Neptune would not let go their coat-tails. Our captain shouted things, our pilot shouted things, and our crew shouted things. The tempest gathered. Already angry mists hid the lemon-crowned precipices above, and one could not help wondering if all those woebegone and

frightened people, tossing about, could escape being dashed against the rocks about them. Pietro, our helmsman, ventured to say that if they were *tedeschi*, no, but if they were gentlefolk like Signor Myself, Heaven would not wait! — a dubious compliment requiring a stipend; therefore, deeming it prodigal to continue so expensive a conversation, I went below to attempt to comfort the comfortless. As for myself, I am never ill at sea, and charity forbids my mentioning the condition of the poor English lady and her disagreeable husband!

Having battled with the elements until our craft seemed ready to give up in despair, the storm abated, clouds lifted, the seas became quiet, and there lay the beautiful island before me. But with all it promised, now sun-kissed and beckoning to us, there were few who could be persuaded to quit the boat. They would return in that hulk of Charon's choosing while the courage and the pain of it all was still on them to bear. After a day's rest to anticipate another such voyage? Never! Thus I was rid of my self-appointed companions.

That, I suppose, is why I had almost everything my own way, and having it so, why I found out that the *bell' isola* was to be mine forever.

Now, being a decisive person, I called on the Sindaco immediately. The signore Sindaco was honored with the attention of the signore Americano. I knew he would be, and that of course he would tell the signore Americano of all the villas to be had. There was the Villa Barbarosso — too high up the mountain, the mark of Jove's wrath in fact, for three times it had been struck by lightning. "Besides" — and the Sindaco whispered something I shall forego repeating. As for the Villa di Fiori — well, although the owner and the Sindaco were not on the good terms they might have been but for undivulged reasons, it was a perfect villa, honesty forced that admission (whatever might be one's private inclinations in respect to such a poor excuse for an owner), a perfect villa, the Sindaco repeated, if the signore Americano was not afraid of the fever germs of the deadly typhus, which common report had it ridden with. Now it happened

that the signore Americano was afraid, precisely that, although he has since found out how certainly the fears of the Sindaco were occasioned by an antipathy quite opposed to the precept, the loving of one's neighbor as one's self. Finally, it seemed, there was the Villa Giacinto, — House of Hyacinth indeed! The signore Americano could, at least, take a look at it; and so he did. Thus he happens to be here this blessed minute, waiting for Vincenzo to return with something he has been telling his master about, something, his padrone has n't the least idea what (for he has not advanced claim to an encyclopædic knowledge of each and every noun known to the favored of the later Latin races). However, the signore Myself is hoping it is something to eat. It is wonderful how this air keeps the appetite constantly nagging at figs and oranges. But I see Vincenzo coming, and it is not something to eat. I might have known not, — that would have been Luisa's prerogative, at least as far as the garden path, where she would be standing and beaming down, inviting my approval, had she entrusted any delicacy to the care of

Vincenzo. No, it is nothing of the sort. It shines, — reflecting the beams of the setting sun as though, heliographically, it were striving to convey a message of its intent to my slow-pacing comprehension. But it does n't, for Vincenzo is not near enough. Now that he is, I call out, "What have you there, Vincenzo?"

III

"È UN telescopo, signore!" explains Vincenzo, as he hands me an instrument of battered brass that looks for all the world like the spy-glass of a Barbary pirate. Now I have a perfect horror of persons prying from their residential fastnesses on the movements of unsuspecting neighbors, merely by virtue of telescopic immunity. I have no doubt Vincenzo has intended it all as a delightful surprise, but I owe it to myself to convey to him a sense of my disapproval of any such specialized investigations. Therefore, taking the glass from him, I close it, and hold it upon my knee.

"Vincenzo," I say, "it is very kind of you to think of everything that you imagine could entertain your padrone. But you see I am unfortunately possessed of many prejudices against telescopes, always excepting, of course, their employment in astronomical observations, or when in use on the high seas."

"But are we not on the high seas, signore?"

Vincenzo protests ingenuously, not a bit confused by all my long words. "Look, and look, and look! Our beautiful island is only a boat of land after all, and what the signore can have against a most delicious telescope — eh, the signore has a right; but I do not understand!" He lifts his shoulder in deprecating disappointment, and half reaches out for the baneful tube. I feel that I have been clumsy.

"Oh," I say, "you must not think, Vincenzo, that I do not appreciate it; only it does not seem just fair to be looking into other people's gardens, and seeing other people, when other people have not the slightest suspicion that they are being seen; does it? It may be entertaining, and, at times, even instructive,— all that I admit. But is it kind, honest Vincenzo?"

"*Santa Constanza!*" Vincenzo exclaims, in well-affected, open-eyed wonder. "Who invited the signore to do such wicked things! Why, there are the mountains under the blue sky above, the green sea below, Messer Vesuvio looking like a half-chewed olive over there to

the right, — smoking all day long, and puffing into the face of those Neapolitan scoundrels, and all of Heaven to the left. Surely the gods have been good and generous, and there is no need for the signore to be spying upon his neighbors. It is not for me to understand how so wicked a thought ever came into my signore's saintly head!"

Now I like to hear Vincenzo when he is stirred up, and it is rather nice to discover that one has a saintly head. I turn mine to conceal the smile I cannot repress. Then, too, Vincenzo has a habit of beginning his tirades by invoking some interesting saint new to my hagiology and ending amazingly, as he often does, with an appeal to pagan deities. That is why I half suspect he is more Greek than your modern Athenian. Every mother's son of them seems to be that on this island, because, perhaps, they have not wasted the heritage of their origin. Yes, I am inclined to think there is more that is Greek in Vincenzo and Luisa than in all the things Lord Elgin fetched over to smother in the smoke of London town.

However rebuked I must admit myself to be, I struggle for a word in self-defense.

"One cannot always be looking out to sea," I say, "like the land-locked mariner in search of a phantom fleet, nor can one be star-gazing on a dazzling summer's day. Even toward Vesuvius there is always danger of not quite clearing the house-tops. Like some unfortunate aeronaut I might miscalculate, and steer the ethereal craft of my vision against a balcony, instead of over-roof. In other words, I might find myself eavesdropping by accident. How can one sometimes help it? What do you say to that?" I am gaining.

"The signore has but to close the telescope," Vincenzo replies with decision. "He has but not to look!"

I have lost.

In the face of Vincenzo's clear logic I have not the heart for obstinacy, so I do not hand back his telescope, — at least not just yet. Instead, I change the subject without committing myself one way or another, and suddenly become interested in the landscape.

"Tell me some more about the monastery

down there, Vincenzo." We both lean forward to look over the edge of the terrace wall, from which we see the spreading white buildings in the distance.

"It was this way, signore," he begins. "Many hundred years ago the good frati built their *convento* down there; year after year they made everything more beautiful, until, at last, they had six hundred little rooms and thirty staircases, all under the protection of the good San Salvatore. Every year they gave away fifty thousand lire to the poor. Think of it, signore! — fifty thousand lire to the poor, in alms and in corn and in wine. The Conti di Minervino started their buildings for them six hundred years before our day, at least Don Enrico says so, and he ought to know, for when he is not preaching, or when he is not saying his mass at San Stefano, or when he is not visiting his poor, he studies such things. He has so many books" (Vincenzo points from one end of the pergola to the other), "and he understands them all. He has lovely little statues in his garden, signore," Vincenzo adds irrelevantly; "he dug them up himself in his vineyard once,

and he says the Romans brought them here." I am sure I should like Don Enrico and the little statues, but as it is not good manners to wander in conversation, I remind Vincenzo of the Certosa.

"Ah, yes, — I had forgotten, — to be sure — about the Certosa! Well, after all, the Normans and the Pirates and those wicked Saracen-limbs-of-Satan, whose children are living over there to-day" (he means the Anacaprese, and points with scorn toward the other side of Monte Solaro, while I remember the bitter feud between the villages), — "after all these wicked ones had gone with their plunder, the dreaded Messer Plague brought Messer Death with his scythe to mow down every soul on the island, except the blessed monks who were in the Certosa. They alone escaped. It was a miracle."

I afterwards learn that the blessed monks, with heartlessness, and an abnormal sense of self-preservation, shut themselves up in their cloisters, refusing to hold communion with the outside world, lest they, too, should become servants of Messer Plague and guests of

Messer Death. However, I do not begrudge Vincenzo the comfort of his version. What else is legend for if not to plant gardens in the barren spots of the past?

Vincenzo hurries on. "This was over two hundred years gone by. Then the English pounced down and took the Certosa away from the good monks, though not for long. The French drove them out in turn, and marched with their arms and baggage right into the cloisters, into the very church, where they turned everything topsy-turvy. Oh, but those were wicked old times! Old Pietro Trama has dug up a rusty cannon-ball from his vineyard that these Frenchmen tossed to there. Do you like the French, signore?"

I am discreetly silent. "Go on, Vincenzo."

"Well, the Certosa never recovered, and the monks are gone long since. May Messer Giove and all the gods watch over them! The six hundred rooms are all as empty as the heads of the Salernese, and not a foot that belongs there steps up and down those thirty staircases." Then he adds, reflectively, "Had not my padrone bought this *piccolo paradiso*

there would still have been left the Certosa." I ask questions. "The Government cannot find any one to buy it, for two hundred and fifty thousand lire is a vast sum, signore, — still the monks gave that away in five years." I find Vincenzo is fond of statistical mathematics. I believe he is much quicker at Thales' science than I am! "Two hundred and fifty thousand lire is a vast sum," he repeats. "I doubt if even the king has so much."

Without disputing Vincenzo's acumen, I reflect that with three hundred cells and the thirty staircases, only being a Mormon could warrant such an extravagance. I know I would not exchange my little villa and its little garden for a hundred certosas with all their creepy monkish memories. However, lest Vincenzo hold any false notion as to my being a Mæcenas in disguise, I hasten to set him right. So I say, "I fear no one will ever buy it, Vincenzo; I doubt if there is so much money in all the world." Vincenzo looks disappointed, yet unconvinced, so I take up the telescope and direct it toward the ruined old cloisters, while he looks at me curiously. Somehow I imagine

he is wondering about my bank account, but in a natural and polite manner.

Suddenly, as the telescope describes an arc, I cry out without thinking, "*Madonna mia!*"

Vincenzo, surprised by my startled tone, asks, in innocent trepidation, if the signore sees anything.

"The signore certainly does not see anything," I lie. "The signore never sees anything." I try to cover my indiscretion forcefully.

"Ah," says Vincenzo, "I thought the signore had seen something. Just now I thought I myself saw something, — something blue, but I have no wonderful telescope, and perhaps it was the sky." His eyes sparkle with mischievous delight. "Or perhaps it was a beautiful blue flower," he adds, "as big as —"

"As big as what, Vincenzo?" I snap, annoyed — I, too, have seen the blue flower.

"Who knows?" (Vincenzo can be as aggravating in his own particular way as any one I know.) "It is not for a mere simple one like me to know, signore. It must have been a — a delusion of the brain of me."

It is not a delusion. It is precisely the image I have retained ever since I saw her looking down from the balcony window, mischievously beautiful. No, it is not a delusion. and now here she is, right in the sweep of the telescope! I am furious that Vincenzo still prowls around, pretending to be fussing with the geraniums. How can I keep looking, and maintain his belief in my telescopic scruples? She is not alone. An older woman is with her, and a man — plainly a foreigner, so I am consumed with curiosity. Vincenzo remains calmly aggravating, whistling a miserable Neapolitan tune. I shall have some questions to ask Luisa. Suddenly Vincenzo stops whistling and is very quiet. After all was it not he who brought me his beloved telescope, and faithfully put it in my ungrateful hand, meaning to please me? To have rewarded him with a sermon that he does not understand and never will, instead of giving him thanks — I am a brute! To make amends I call him over to me again.

"This is a wonderful telescope, my Vincenzo! I am very proud that we have it, so don't give

it away." I watch his face light up with pleasure.

"It is a wonderfully good telescope, signore, the best on the island."

Of course I yield. If there are so many perhaps it is all right after all!

"And it is very true, Vincenzo," I add pacifically, "very true what you say about our little boat of land. We shall have to set up as *marinai di terra!* What you say about the mountains under the blue sky, of the sea below us, and of Messer Vesuvio over there is also very true, and we need not be led into temptation after all."

Vincenzo is quite sure we need not, and to be certain, takes a peek through the glass for himself.

IV

Luisa has told me all about her, lingering, I suppose, under the impression, from heaven knows where, that the Contessa's sister has stirred within me a wave of romance. I let her run on, however, for the way Luisa makes it plain there is n't a particle of hope shows a tender solicitude that is flattering. Her name is Francesca; his, Von Wulff — Baron von Wulff. Luisa says that as the family have made up their minds, a thing, she says, they are famous for doing, that as the Baron has n't changed his, and that as the signorina Francesca is dutiful, why that is all there is to be said about it.

Probably Luisa is right; usually she is.

Von Wulff is not a beautiful name; it would stick to one's memory like remorse to the conscience. That, I suppose, is why I know I have heard it before. It comes back to me on the instant — the Baron with his abominable black oil-cloth luggage, Tyrolean togs, pudgy

face — which of course he could n't help — and aggressive ill-breeding — which of course he could — pushing himself into the compartment at Empoli, as though it were the Ark of Noah, and pushing himself out again like some Herulian hurricane. Was n't it a terrific downpour that met us at Siena, though! And the Baron, incredibly nimble, seizing the only conveyance to be had, leaving me there with three disgruntled old ladies from England on my hands, old ladies of the sight-seeing sort that venture from Florence alone, violently vexatious, and of necessity thrown upon the resources of my rain-coat, umbrella, and patience, until, dripping and bedraggled, we found our way into the Pride of Senius on a water-logged tram-car, whose plush seats had long since become veritable sponges of discomfort, dangerous to delicate constitutions.

We met at dinner, all of us, since Dame Fortune stood hostess to our destinies in the way of the same *pensione* and its single dining-table. The Baron appeared early (his invariable custom when food was to be the programme), eating everything on the board,

utterly oblivious to the law of limitations. As continental table manners are at best still reminiscent of emphatic mediævalism, the Baron distinguished himself supremely in this direction, while from time to time the hungry little old ladies from England looked on, I occasionally rescuing a bit of bread out of the very jaws of the Baron as a last straw to be grasped by the four of us, otherwise sinking in the sea of sustenance.

Nevertheless we out-generaled the Teuton by prolonging our stay some two days beyond his. We celebrated his departure by a feast at the *Eden*, with afterwards a turn at the little circus by the Lisa, where the Umbrian clown consoled us with skits on the Herr Baron, for which I had arranged in advance, that the dear old ladies might not go back without pleasant impressions of the grim old city after all. A gala night! Poor dear indefatigable little old ladies from England! I really missed them when they left.

And so it is to be the dreadful Herr Baron and the lovely Contessa's sister — the Beast and the Beauty. Being quite independent, I

can remark to myself, without being hauled up for commonplace, that the world is a tiny place. It is almost as though I had the *dramatis personae* by heart, and had then unexpectedly stumbled upon a rehearsal. So I turn again to the oracular Luisa.

"Does she love him?" I ask.

"Heaven forbid!" This is startling, but I am pleased. "Why, who, signore, could love a terrible *tedesco?*" Luisa is surprised at my stupidity.

"Then why does she intend to marry him?"

"Eh, but he is very rich, signore, very rich. And he has arranged it with the signorina Francesca's uncle. The signorina Francesca's uncle is very much pleased. He likes him very much. They quarrel over cribbage. So it is all settled."

I am silent a moment. I wonder if I, too, could not quarrel with the uncle over cribbage. But alas! I know nothing about cribbage.

"It is a very wicked game, Luisa."

"*Mama mia!* Yes," she answers, "to marry, it is a game."

Now of course I meant cribbage, and Luisa

knows very well that I did: but I look over at Vincenzo, who has just come in. Nothing there indicates any occasion for an intended thrust, so I conclude it is just a philosophical generalization on Luisa's part.

"Luisa tells me the Contessa's sister is in love with the German Baron."

"A woman never gets anything right, signore!" Vincenzo replies with a deprecating look at Luisa, the Inferior "The Contessa's sister is as good as she is beautiful, as sensible as she is both. Therefore to love the barone tedesco were to love a pork. The signorina Contessa's sister does not love a pork. It is only that she is obedient. Signor Uncle will have his way and his cribbage, and that is all there is to it." Another withering look at Luisa suggests the expediency of explaining that I fear I have not exactly interpreted her aright, and that, after all, she too had given me to understand it was more a matter of the uncle and cribbage than of love and lute-strings. But Vincenzo is nettled.

"Must the Contessa's sister be so dutiful, Vincenzo?" I inquire, thinking what a pretty

allegory it would have made had she been christened Margherita, a pearl, too precious to cast before match-seeking *tedeschi* by cribbage-mad uncles. "Must she be so dutiful and break her heart, maybe? Is there no one else?"

They both laugh.

"Always," Vincenzo declares, by way of explaining his levity, "up to the next to the last minute, *certo* there is somebody else! But then, after that, never, that is so far as the signorina Francesca will be concerned. It's a pity, for the good San Costanzo knows what a sweet will of her own she has! Now there was the English *milor*," Vincenzo holds out his fingers and begins to count, "and the French marquis, and the Russian prince."

"And the Austrian count," Luisa adds.

"And the Neapolitan senator," Vincenzo concludes.

I hold my breath from wonderment, and begin to feel that one's skies may be more overcast than one suspects.

"And they were all rich." Luisa confirms Vincenzo's information.

"Terribly rich." This is not reassuring.

"And old and ugly," says Luisa. This is.

Now I am not old, nor am I especially ugly; anyway Luisa looks at me and smiles knowingly. I must not encourage any such familiarity, however, so I scowl. As scowls are alien to my disposition I am not successful, and Luisa asks me if I have neuralgia. She will probably ask me next if I am in love. I would have a good answer for that, but I suppose I must make allowance for the romantic temperament of the south, so I decide not to be annoyed after all. Naturally I confess to a very strong interest in the Contessa's sister, but it is only because life must have a little poetry now and then to discipline the shaft-proof.

To be perfectly honest, I confess that if I may have said, "What if I should fall in love with you, fair lady!" when there at the balcony window I saw the Contessa's sister, it was only because I wanted to see what sort of a poem it might make to imagine her mistress of Villa Giacinto some fine day, with summer flown and come again. Poets, I believe, may think almost anything they choose anywhere they

happen to be, about any one they see, and as Luisa is not supposed to know anything about poetry, and as I never read her mine, I must expect lots of romantic conjectures from her literal mind.

Perhaps it was the scent of the jasmine flower, and the beautiful picture of her as she stood there that made me think all these futile things about the Contessa's sister. Sentiment I confess to, but I have always known myself not sentimental. As I am not unkind, it is gratifying to my sense of self-virtue to realize that my dislike of the Baron was well settled long before ever I saw the Contessa's sister. That it may become intensified is not to be set down to jealousy. To suppose that were, under the circumstances, absurd; I am only sorry, very sorry, for the dear little sister of the Contessa. If the Contessa's sister marries the Herr Baron there will be no poem for me to dream, nothing but the awful prose of cribbage and one's uncle.

Luisa brings me a tiny glass of golden *liquore* after my coffee. She tells me it is *La Strega* — the witch. My own feeling of en-

chantment responds to the witchery of the evening, so I insist on going out for a walk in the cool night air. Luisa urges me to beware the *scirocco*, but I am not afraid of any such silly thing. I often wonder that the Italians survive the shut-inness of their night-time. They cover themselves with blankets in July, and fasten their windows as tightly as besieged in time of war. I often wonder how the morning finds them alive. As for myself, I will do none of these stifling things, and every morning when Vincenzo brings in my breakfast he looks to see that I have not been blown to a terrifying ague by the gentle zephyrs that waft themselves in at my open casement, and with a sigh of intense relief, he mutters, "The good God has again been kind!" Then I hear Luisa, who has been listening outside the door for signs of life, stealthily tiptoe away, immensely relieved that there is not to be a funeral after all.

The evening is perfect. As I come down the hill into the Via Tragara I hear a sweet-voiced song blown toward me on the night air, and I stop to listen to it.

Sweetheart, good-night!
Fragrant the jasmine-flower,
Kissing the moon-glow!
Sleep thou within thy bower!
Gently the winds blow,
Cradling my love for thee!

Like leaf of almond-tree,
Like rippling fountain's flow,
Full with the moon's proud hour,
Bending with perfume low,
My love, like jasmine-flower!
Good-night, sweetheart!

The last note dies away with the sob of the sea, and is echoed by the clattering of the little wooden-soled sandals of the children, hurrying down the little *strada* ahead, on their way to the piazza.

Suddenly there comes borne on the night air the rhythmic din of cymbals, the metallic nervousness of tambourines, and the squeaking and squawking that betoken one of my truest delights, good old Pulcinello, who has come forth even in this remote spot to gladden the hearts of a generation that scampers about in wild delight. My own heart scampers with theirs, too, for I still cling to the heritage of my Golden Age. But the song of the jasmine-

flower still lingers with me as I turn the corner and find myself on the piazza. It is the sort of song, I tell myself, that my Lady-of-the-Balcony would like to have sung to her on just such a night as this. Then I cannot help wondering if any one has ever sung it to her. Surely not the terrible Herr Baron! At least there is some comfort in that. Thus one's sense of the ridiculous restores the spirit to buoyancy, and I laugh at the thought.

There before me is the Pulcinello show; the whole island has turned out to see it. But even its hereditary attractions seem nothing compared to my own, and I am both amazed and embarrassed to find myself the sudden centre of attraction, when I had only intended to slip down for the mail. Here, too, is the foreign colony *en masse*. There they all are, eleven fortunate or unfortunate souls. After all it is rather pleasant to feel that one is to round out a respectable dozen. There is something, too, about every one that makes me imagine a welcome. So I begin to feel at home.

As I cross to the archway I almost bump into the three persons I saw this afternoon

through Vincenzo's telescope,—the Contessa's sister, the elderly lady, and the Herr Baron. There can be no mistake. I apologize for my clumsiness, the Contessa's sister smiles it away, the elderly lady is amused, and the Herr Baron unperturbed in his massiveness. I hurry on to the post-office, giving time for recognition to penetrate his well-protected brain.

V

HAVING breakfasted in bed like a Caliph, I dress and come down into my little garden to poke around in the morning sun. Everything is carved of crystalline color, and the whole world seems like an iridescent *profumino*, fragrant with the breath of flowers, refreshingly sweet beyond any of the heavy perfumes that weary the senses. Cool is the day and delicious, and the sky overhead like a baldacchino of pale cerulean velvet. Vincenzo hands me a letter from America. I forget everything else and hurry to open the envelope. I suppose it is a sort of international provincialism that finds one caring more about what those little stamped missives from one's own birth-country have to tell than for any foreign thing under the sun, and so, for a minute, I too become internationally provincial. It is a letter from John North, — dear old Jack, who loves to take liberties with my dignity, and is at it again: —

"Dear Mossless Roller," he has the temerity to begin, "you will be properly delighted to know Elsie met the Carringtons before she left Florence. They told her you had decided to pitch your tent for good in the land of the lazy. They all approve of it. I don't. So, as I said before, you will be properly delighted. Why a fellow wants to miss a good chance of going into the wholesale business — you know I opened the portals of ours to you (the minute I heard you had fallen heir to your crusty old great-uncle's dough) — and yet you refuse to be guided by the spirit of the times, and instead of nobly joining every one of us in working ourselves to death in dingy offices, scheming how we can run up the price of living and rake off a margin for our own, you, heedless of your duty toward civilization, suddenly declare that you are going to lead such an irrational life as the one you have chosen, which combines rest, health, contemplation, freedom from worry, and time for your friends. I sadly fear you are very far behind the times; none of these things is modern. However, if you will be antiquated there's no help for it. If you should get stuck

for sandals, just send over your measure. Of course, I will admit some of the attractions over there, for I remember Carmelina, though Elsie says I should n't. If you ever get tired of it and show up here, remember we have a spare bed that is as hard as any you'll find in Europe — we keep it for Uncle Charles (you know he is not particularly agreeable and stays on if he guesses he is n't wanted) — but by all the good trout in Benton's Creek, don't become *one of the people*. I'm just breaking Elsie of it. Actually she came home imagining she had n't *been thrown with any of the tourists*, which is what I deserve for letting her travel alone. I tell her there would n't be any tourists if yourselves stayed at home unfurling the Stars and Stripes. However, I don't mind your joining the Mafia, for there's nothing halfway in that. But I suppose, being a poet, you'll do pretty much as you please. Elsie is looking over my shoulder and says what I've written about her is malicious fabrication. It is not polite for a man to contradict his wife, so I must refrain from any individual commentary. Elsie says a whole house sounds

jolly and precious like things that happen in June! Well, let us know, for it takes a deucedly long time for a silver butter-dish to reach the Bay of Naples! Be sure and present the letter Elsie is inclosing to the dearest lady you will find on the hemisphere — Mrs. Delmar. She is a Bostonian, who married an Englishman. They say her husband, who was a Lieutenant-Colonel posted in Canada, died in a tantrum over the Boston Tea-party, and that it was a happy accident for her future happiness. She lives in a charming villa on your island, and if you have not met the Delmars already, you will thank us for introducing you. All sorts of nice people from all over the world are at her house. Elsie says by the time this reaches you there will not be a man, woman, or child in the province that you will not know; nevertheless, I inclose the letter, and wind this up with the wistful plea that you write and tell us all that's happening. Yours, in expectation,

"JACK NORTH."

Elsie North and I once thought we were in love. John North came along and proved we

were n't. Now and then I tease Elsie by saying I wish he had n't, and yet we both know we would have been utterly miserable, though we did n't know it then. I turn again to North's letter and read the note of introduction, as I light another cigarette. Through the little whiffs of smoke, it is pleasant for one to read how nice one is. I also seem to see Fortune's smiling face, for it cannot be that Fate has not had a hand in Elsie's Mrs. Delmar being the nice elderly lady with the Contessa's sister yesterday and again last night on the piazza. Providence carefully arranges these things when it chooses, but to make sure I call Luisa. She comes running out of her kitchen.

"Are you quite sure, Luisa," I ask her, "that the lady with the Contessa's sister yesterday was the signora Delmar?"

"*Meeses* Delmar," Luisa emphasizes with a happy artfulness, "*una donna Americana — inglese*. Very sure, padrone mio."

"But how are you sure, Luisa?" I persist. "It was a long way to see."

"Ah, signore, not so very far after all, when I tell you that before Vincenzo brought the

beautiful *telescopo* to his padrone (who is so kind and never cross)" — this she interpolates to mollify the effect of the discovery — "I myself peeped through it and I saw them all — Signorina Francesca, the signora Delmar" — she pronounced it deliciously — "and the signore Barone." A question comes into my eyes and she hastens to add, "Oh, but it was only just such a little peep!"

Now it cannot be a good thing to permit Luisa to spend her time spying on people who may become her padrone's friends, even though he may find advance information entertaining. Therefore, I find myself relapsing by mental leaps and bounds into my old antipathy for telescopes in times of extreme peace. But Luisa is too quick for me — I suppose that scamp Vincenzo has been posting her — for she hastens to explain.

"The signore must not think I looked through it to *see* things!" (She seems horrified at the idea.) "I did not look to *see* things; that is not the servant's place. *Mama mia, no!*" Luisa becomes vehement. "No, I only looked to make very sure the glass was clean, that

dust and cobwebs should not be there to offend the honorable eyesight of my padrone."

This is the first time I have known specific attention to be paid the matter of dust and cobwebs in all Italy; therefore I feel that I have learned something I had not before dreamed existed in the realm of domestic economy, and I accept the apology without reservation, for of course, after all, I am very glad to find Luisa so careful of my comfort, and, besides, I reflect that it settles my doubts as to the identity of Elsie North's friend. Moreover, nothing annoys me more than dust and cobwebs, and Luisa's departure from the traditions of her land in this respect leads me to believe that in her I may have found, after all, a treasure indeed. Anyway, I am sure, now, it was the American lady, so I hurry Vincenzo off to her villa with Mrs. North's letter and my card.

Vincenzo looks at the card dubiously.

"What is the matter, Vincenzo?" I ask.

He starts as though caught in an expression of disapproval that he would hide, but which torments him not to express.

"It is only," he stammers, "it is only — only that the corners are square. The signore Tedesco's visiting-cards have round corners, and so had the cards of the signore Marchese. But perhaps this is the new mode?"

"The very latest mode!" I answer, immensely amused. "The infinitely eternal mode, Vincenzo!" And then I remember that etiquette on the Continent is more or less a matter of geometry, as matrimony is one of higher mathematics.

Thus relieved, Vincenzo sets forth on his errand in high feather. I watch his departure from my little terrace, and I hear him singing in that high falsetto which is only beautiful in the Italian voice, and which strikes a resonant response in the heart of the listener as no other singing in the whole world just does — I listen to him as he goes down the path, trilling

Vide 'o mare quant' è bello!
Spira tantu sentimente,
Comme tu a chi tiene mente
Ca scetato 'o faie sunna.

And how beautiful the wonderful sea is this morning! I turn toward where it stretches

forth from this kingdom of the Teleboans, where once dwelt the nymph Sebethis, about whom Messer Virgilio tells in his *rime*. But there seem to be other nymphs, too, for way off there I just catch a glimpse of a bit of the strand by the Piccola Marina, where the sea appears to be the playground of a crowd of splashing figures. I blush to find myself thinking of the telescope, and blame it all on Messer Virgilio. In fact, I turn away and busy myself with the geraniums, as I have seen Vincenzo do. He is certainly a master gardener, and I am very proud of him.

I cannot help thinking how beautiful these scarlet flowers would look in the lovely black hair of the Contessa's sister. I prefer scarlet to crimson, and that, too, is why I adore the flower of the quince.

Suddenly I am aware that some one, with the stealth of a visitor's conscious intrusion, has come into my garden. I feel almost sure it is the Herr Baron, so I do not look up immediately. In fact, I can guess of no one else who would snoop around here unbidden, just as he used to do in Siena. I shall come to ex-

pect visitors, plenty of them later on, if Vincenzo's skill keeps its standard, yet I reflect that now I ought to be let alone until I am settled. I do not know why I feel sure it is the Baron, but, as I struggle to my feet, I make up my mind to be only as civil to him as the traditions of enforced hospitality demand. So I turn about with freezing dignity (intensely put out that Luisa should not have minded the garden door more carefully) and face my unbidden guest with frigid demeanor.

He quavers.

"*Bambino mio!*" I cry, startled completely out of myself as a thrush who is tumbled off the nest; then I whistle one of my own peculiar whistles, which always expresses happy surprise, though my enemies say it sounds like a poor imitation of a catastrophe. I whistle, and exclaim, "*Bambino mio!* where, oh, where did you drop from, little one?"

Little One has n't the faintest idea, or if he has conceals it intrepidly. I look about, only to find that no one else has come with him. He is three, perhaps four, and stands there straight as any soldier. But I guess he is

barely recovering from the fright of seeing me bob up from beyond the phlox (too tall for him to have looked over), though I declare he never flinched.

As for myself, I am delighted that it is not the Herr Baron. I might have reflected that his footsteps would at least have been elephantine. I have always been famous for bringing up other people's children. They never do it sensibly, and I have never understood why they seem to resent my excellent suggestions. Perhaps I shall have a chance, unhindered, with this wee, olive-skinned cherub who remains so mute, simply staring at me curiously.

Now I pride myself on all sorts of jolly tricks that usually provoke juvenile mirth to the very edge of hilarity. However, it is sometimes hard to know how to begin, when taken unawares, especially if you have made up your mind it would turn out a Baron. Nevertheless I pick up a sprig of larkspur and hand it to the Little One. He will not take it. So I do a little skip-step that used to send my cousin Mary's children wild with delight; — he meets

it with just that shade of wonderment that seems equivalent to making me feel I am but a sorry exhibition after all. Therefore I proceed to translate *Hey-diddle-diddle* into Italian as a *coup de maître*, but he seems positively bored. Later I learn that there are neither cats nor fiddles on the island, and, as he has never been away from it, this may explain my failure.

There is nothing left, then, but to hunt up Luisa, so I reach out my hand and invite him to come along. His baby face wreathes itself in smiles and he clutches my finger, toddling along with me. Then as a happy thought, I lift him to my shoulders, and defer the search until we have had a romp around the garden. He peeps from his vantage with those mischievous eyes of his, nearly startling me into letting him fall as unexpectedly he bursts into voluble conversation — I had almost imagined that Heaven had denied one of its cherubs the gift of speech! Not that I understand a single word he utters, but instantly I determine to throw aside Dante for baby-talk. Never did I yearn to know the secrets of an

alien tongue as now I do this wee one's language of babyhood.

Soon, however, he comes to understand me, now that he is no longer frightened. Moreover, he is addressing me by the reverend appellation of *nonno*. Now I am no one's grandfather, but I reflect that I may seem a Methuselah to a destiny that has run but three or four years at the utmost; so I forgive him with a kiss. He returns it as though I had earned it, and I am already hoping that Heaven has lent him to Phœbus to bring down to me in his chariot. Perhaps he will tell me his name now, so I ask him in the dialect I am rapidly acquiring under Luisa's patient training. He smiles, and because he likes the fragrance of the white carnation I am silly enough to be wearing over my ear, whispers just under it.

I start more surprised than ever. Never have the gods sent happier omen than in the name this wee one bears! I look back at my little *casa* in swelling pride; the gods have outdone Italian *politessa* itself, for they have sent their Baby Ganymede from Olympus with the christening cup of approval, blessing my hum-

ble abode with the auspicious sign, for, as Luisa comes running up, beaming with amusement to find me here with my arms full of infancy, I am able to tell her they have given one name to two treasures, their little son and my little villa, and I repeat it to her, — Giacinto.

VI

"Ah, signore," she tells me, "you know it is the little Conte Roderini, and his family is so noble, so very noble," with emphasis, "that a *contadina* would never dream of having such bad manners as to name her bambino with what almost belongs to the little Conte's family by right. And the father — poor man! — died in the wicked war in Abyssinia."

In this hint I find that the exclusive bambino is part and parcel of the very excellent family Vincenzo has already told me about, and I feel that grace is lent to it by the fact that the Contessa's sister is under its respectable roof.

"But the Contessa herself is also of very noble family," Luisa adds, "of the very noblest, signore. Her great-grandfather shot a wicked Austrian through the heart." I am elated at the success of the Contessa's family; even if the Conte's has exclusive right to a name, the Contessa's can cherish the undimmed memory of one good shot.

"Then this heavenly *bimbo*, Giacinto, is heir to all that glory?" I ask Luisa.

"And all that sorrow, signore," Luisa answers. "But if he is heavenly, as the signore says—well,"—her eyes sparkle again,—"he is heavenly at running away! Every one knows that; San Costanzo has a busy time of it,—and the only child!"

Without inquiring into the size of the family, which is evidently the tack Luisa is intending to take, I ask her (rather foolishly I admit), if she thinks Giacinto has run away this time.

"The signore must judge for himself!" At which the circumspect Luisa and I both laugh. Perhaps the ingenious gods have other intentions, after all: no one has sent me any letter of introduction to the Contessa's family, and a daring thought comes to me as I take note of the tiny bit of humanity *illustrissimo*, drawn up before me with such an absurd little air of dignity that I could pick him up in my arms and almost smother him with kisses, were it not for that amazing little look of disapproval at anticipated demonstrativeness in public that suddenly comes into his amazing

little countenance. Then I guess, instantly, that he is wondering at Luisa's familiarity in being permitted to smile in his noble presence, and at his noble presence, and so, to avert a storm at the cost of my chagrin, I order her back into the house to fetch me some bonbons, hidden away there, that ought to please the bimbo and restore confidence, — philosophy never having defined the time at which the heart of man first begins to be reached through his stomach.

Now I bought these sweets at Morgano's yesterday; the small pound cost me a Caprese fortune. Carolina herself told me no one had ever bought so much as a pound of them from her in her life before, and Carolina, though still a great beauty, is no longer just young. I fancy she thought it a mistake, or that I had been overcome by the noon-day heat, for, noting my surprise, she volunteered to release me from the full extent of my obligation by suggesting half the quantity. But it was a good lesson that after five cents' worth of candy has survived a voyage from London, or a trip from Paris, it is worth five times its

native par value in Italy; — I feel the same way about my tickets every time I take a continental journey of any length. So I could not begrudge the sweets their valuation, nor Carolina her enormous profit; therefore I left her marveling at my prodigality. However, I now hold it clear that Heaven intended them for Giacinto; so that is how he comes to be munching them now.

Presently our feast is interrupted by the clanging of the garden door. Giacinto drops everything and helter-skelters behind an oleander tree, fearing pursuit, for, indeed, that delicious sense of his truant guilt tinges his brown-red cheeks until he looks like a sun-kissed apricot, head peeping out, eyes askance, through the oleander leaves.

Fortunately there is no need to fear. It is only the return of Vincenzo. He brings back a message from Mrs. Delmar. Can I come down for tea at four? Of course I can. I shall.

As for Vincenzo, the minute he spies the *piccolo Conte*, trembling like an olive leaf at dawn, he looks around aggravatingly, as

though he imagines still other visitors may be sequestered in our rose garden, and deferentially pretends to tip-toe away. Of course, I am both angry and annoyed at his impertinence. Before I have time to say so he becomes as suddenly contrite, for Luisa, catching sight of him, begins a violent scolding about the coals. Now I have never seen a stick of wood nor a coal-yard on the island, and I have never attempted to guess what they have been cooking with, charcoal being a conveniently jolly and romantic term with which to cover up my ignorance. I often wonder, however, if they have not had to steal fire over here from Olympus to keep going, only I know that could never be, — there never was an honester man than your Caprese born, he simply could not steal anything, and thus escapes the fate of every Prometheus.

Perhaps, then, it is for not getting charcoal that Luisa scolds Vincenzo; but whatever it is all about I have, at last, to ask them to stop their verbal din, whereat Giacinto seems to regain confidence in my social standing, and to feel that my stern assertion of mastership

counteracts any earlier display of weakness on my part in having let Luisa smile at us.

Anyway he steps forward, and I hand him a white verbena, which he accepts with noble grace, tucking it back of his little ear, on the left side, just as the grown-up gallants are expected to do. I remember this trick at Girgenti, and wonder how it has traveled north, — perhaps with Ulysses.

"Do you hear those beautiful bells, Giacinto mio?" I ask him, when Vincenzo and Luisa have decided to cease monopolizing all sound. "They are telling us that the Contessa, your beloved mother, will soon be despatching her entire household to descend upon us if we do not anticipate this by going home to throw ourselves contritely on her mercy."

I do not like to hint too definitely, in simple language, that I know he has run away, therefore I put it in the most literary form possible. Perhaps, I persuade myself, he has heard of China, and thinks it is I, for my first journey to Persia, at the age of two, was accomplished in much the same manner, within the space of not more than fifteen minutes, mean time,

from America. That, however, was a miracle of locomotion standing as nothing compared to another which, at the age of four, enabled me to reach the North Pole, and to find it comfortably and conveniently located under a tall sunflower stalk, where the relief party found me asleep an hour later, preciously near being stung by an honest hornet, who had left his hermitage aloft to investigate the invasion. Since I have grown up I have never had journeys half so delightful, excursions so thrilling, or travels so wonderful. For this reason I cannot bear to dispel the dear little delusions Giacinto may be having, particularly if he happens to think I am Mongolia, and so, almost hoping he does, I decide to live up to the rôle.

Therefore I ask him to climb over the Great Wall with me, that we may traverse the Tartary country without, until we may reach the Himalayas, whence, I explain, if good luck attend us, we may hope, by easy stages, to reach the palazzo where our Contessa mother and our Contessa mother's sister will, according to computations, just about be awaiting our tardy coming.

Having planned it all and charted it on the sands of the fountain path, we give Luisa and Vincenzo a few directions, leaving them grinning in their silly fashion, for our immediate departure from the Celestial Kingdom seems to amuse them beyond reason; at least, they cease the muffled squabble about the charcoal, and behave as any husband and wife should behave, who have the good fortune to witness the sudden metamorphosis from gastronomy to geology, which surely is no more remarkable than the turning of Mrs. Lot to a pillar of salt.

Oblivious of their attitude, we take a last look at them standing there in the vanishing kingdom, and I begin to explain to Giacinto a few of the perils which reasonably we may expect to encounter along the route, not that he understands me, but conversation is necessary to the exploit. Then, at a particularly arid spot in the desert of the Via Tragara, I turn into a camel and Giacinto enjoys the feat hugely. In fact, I am quite proud of it myself, for every one stares at us, which makes us feel important, and we enjoy that, too, though

alone I am of a naturally retiring disposition. Suddenly a cloud spreads over the fair skies of the bambino's blessed countenance. Consulting my invisible book of magic, as a perfectly proper camel should, I guess what the matter is, and whisper my conclusions in Giacinto's ear, — only a camel could have managed it. Giacinto nods his head in confirmation of my ingenuity. Therefore as we approach Tessa Monceno's coral-shop we pause to buy an especially efficacious bit, a sure charm against sudden assaults on the person, and we hang it around our neck. Surely with a beautiful coral butterfly dangling from a shining silver chain why need one fear Ulyssesian unpleasantnesses at homecoming? The cloud disappears, for one does n't; so, lightheartedly, two climb up the stairway of the wonderful old Norman-time palazzo, where a lovely maiolica madonna (perhaps brought down from Deruta by some early-day conqueror) smiles reassuringly at us from the second landing, which, of course, defines the boundaries of our Caucasus.

From the top of the third landing another

lovely face looks down, but it is not a maiolica face of any Lady of Sorrows. It is a very real and wonderfully lovely face set in a mass of soft black hair, caught up by a crown of jessamine, while the streaming sunlight, finding its way through the little panes of the window just back of it, lends a glory of golden light to frame the lovely vision. Presently we are high enough to see two bewitching eyes, and Mino da Fiesole never modeled sweeter lips to kiss than those parted with exquisite precision to greet the roguish little stranger who, the minute he sees their owner, deserts his faithful camel without compunction, and with a little gladsome cry to his *Zia* Francesca, throws himself into her arms.

"Oh, my naughty darling Giacinto!" she exclaims, hugging him to her breast, "Where have you been, you wicked little bimbo! Mamma is frightened to death, and looks everywhere for you!"

Hearing Mamma at the piano within I conclude the angel of the landing is exaggerating, though a most natural thing to do under the circumstances, I suppose. As for Bimbo Gia-

cinto, he lifts up the coral butterfly protectingly, and his Aunt Francesca bursts into a merry laugh. Then I introduce myself and explain the situation as best I can, though all my precious Italian seems recalcitrant, and I stumble along in embarrassment, until I realize I am saying nothing intelligible, and so depart in mortification down those endless stairs. Giacinto sets up a wail, complimentary to my plight. That he should care to do so on my account soothes me somewhat, but it causes the piano to stop. Whereupon the sincerity of his grief at parting is unmistakable, and I, too, feel somewhat desolate as I reach the bottom step. So I look up, by way of parting, and there I see the Contessa's sister and Giacinto's Contessa Mamma peeping over the stone balustrade. I cannot tip my hat, for, being a camel, I have left mine behind, and so I have none to tip. I can only throw a kiss to the weeping Giacinto, and wonder if ever another beast-of-burden has been so pestered with conventions.

Presently I hear the Contessa Mamma at the piano again. I look up as I pass under the

balcony and I imagine some one is peeping out. Giacinto, possibly, but I can take no risk, so I trudge on home, marveling at the ways of caravans.

VII

When I am home again Luisa and Vincenzo look at one another slyly. Then Vincenzo goes out into the garden.

Presently he is singing a silly little song that seems to amuse Luisa immensely, though I do not listen to it. If I did, I would have to be angry, — instead I am pleased, quite.

As I entice my spaghetti into a little coil with the prongs of my fork, thankful that Luisa does not leave it raw (as the Paduans do), I turn over in my mind my going to Mrs. Delmar's. It would be rather amusing if the Contessa's sister should happen to be there! But would it be so amusing if I found myself with all my fine Italian running helter-skelter out of my head as it did this morning? I am diffident — though Jack North insists the bronze doors of San Giovanni's can't hold a candle to my sterling qualities — nevertheless I am also sociable. Therefore I decide to harbor no fear.

Since lunching there has been nothing in particular to do but lounge around and count the bells of the quarters ringing out from the little campanile on the piazza; I am not in a working mood. Finally I pick out a propitious hour, and in company with the music of the bells start forth to explore my way to the house of the agreeable Boston lady, whose husband was n't.

On my way I pass San Stefano's, *madre chiesa* of my little island — and I cannot resist stepping inside, as I did yesterday. In these fifteen hundred years they have furbished it up quite a bit, I am told, since Giovanni, the prattling prelate of Sorrento, refused to take the trouble of coming over to consecrate it. What a fuss there was about the matter! They say the bewildered old Abbot Savino had to get Gregory the Great to put on his papal pressure, but whitewash mixes up history, so one cannot be sure of there being any truth in these entertaining scandals.

Here I come upon Luisa's cousin, the saracenic-looking person who sells Neapolitan pottery in a little corner under the passage-way.

She seems to be imploring help from the entire hierarchy of heaven, to judge from the glibness of her sanctimonious appeals. And as I draw within hearing I guess the trouble on her soul; I have heard all about it from Luisa. A fortnight ago the cousin was so unfortunate as to lose a precious family relic, none other than a tooth from the revered jawbone of her old grandmother. I cannot help smiling at the tale, but Luisa is very serious about it.

It seems the remarkable grandmother lived to an incredible old age, even for one among these insular centenarians, and that long before her last days she had lost each of the precious teeth that Madame Nature had given to add distinction to the renowned beauty of her youth; that is, she had lost all but one. This remained to the last, — solid, conspicuous, and uncomfortable. I doubt if the unicorn or the wild boar were more afflicted, but, whereas they were poor unintelligent beasts, Luisa's cousin's grandmother understood how remarkable a thing it was that this tooth should keep company with her hundredth birthday, and found comfort in the fact; nay,

even more than that, she regarded its possession as miraculous, — an opinion shared by her gossips. Indeed no one dreamed of passing Bettina Costantino's door without first stopping to inquire for the tooth of the grandmother. But alas! One fine day Eternity outsped Time, and Bettina Costantino breathed her last. Delicacy forbids my suggesting how it happened that her famous tooth did not follow her to Paradise, or how the relic was saved to be a solace to those she had left behind her in this world of sin and sorrow; yet some there are who have especial veneration for such things.

After that Luisa's cousin became chief custodian of the relic, having Zello, the village Cellini, mount it in silver, that it might be worn on grand occasions, — a wedding or a festa, — hitched to a little silver chain around the neck, where every one might see it. Alas, careless neck! Unmindful of its precious charge it had permitted the clasp to come undone, and the treasured *reliquia* to slip loose.

But I leave Luisa's cousin at prayer, and though I suppose I ought to stop to intercede

for her, for Charity's sweet sake, I glance at my watch, and like many another sinner, find I have not time for prayer and pastime both, so I hurry on my way.

The little passage leading from San Stefano skirts a walled precipice, lined, along its outer side, with tiny shops that cling to the crest of an eminence like nesting summer swallows. Gay-colored strips of patterned cloth to wind around *bambini* hang outside, and a little further on is the pottery shop of Luisa's disconsolate cousin. This is my first glimpse of the curious arcaded *strada*, and I am fascinated by its mysterious windings. Midway a *piazzetta* brings me out from all the staring whitewash of the passage into the sunshine, which makes it dazzling under those skies of robin's-egg blue that stretch illimitably above a sea of lapis lazuli. One does not guess the infinite number of blues that can tint heaven's arc, nor the variant colors of the seas until fortune brings him here. Although I trot along in high feather, I meet almost a chance for homesickness just a bit farther on when, to the right, of a sudden I come within the range of the cry

of our own blessed eagle. There he is, fierce and gilt, and immobile, clutching his clawsful of arrows to repel outsiders, who would peek in through the chinks of the iron gate. This, then, I discover, is the American consulate. I am brave, and my heart gives a bound, for I feel I belong to it, and that a bit of it belongs to me. Just because I do, and then because no one is looking, I stand on tip-toe and crane my neck for a look at the premises. I had no idea that any one had a consul here, and I am enormously curious to see what in the world one could find to keep him busy.

There through the chinks of the gate a miniature court presents itself to my unmannered intrusion, and just beyond it I know there is a garden. Now I love gardens, so I look again; but immediately I jump down and hurry on, — Heaven has punished my curiosity! Pandora could not have been more chagrined! The garden gate has opened, and there, looking straight at the spot where my eyes have just been glued, stands none other than the Herr Baron, last of all persons in the world, I angrily tell myself, it is pleasant to come unexpectedly

or expectedly across. I am almost sure he saw me, that is, he looked surprised and frowned; and I feel that the eagle has played me an unkind trick in not affording better protection to a countryman. I am convinced, now, that the Baron spends all his time in getting into my way, to frustrate my tranquillity — first Siena, then the telescope, and now the consulate. Anyway I shall never believe the Contessa's sister can care a straw about him. If all this really keeps on I shall come to distrust the cribbage-playing uncle most thoroughly, and I begin to wonder what Mrs. Delmar will think of him.

Yet it is somewhat comforting, as I look furtively back, to find the Baron is not toiling up the hill after me. Were he up to anything of the sort I might be tempted to roll a stone rattling down the hill on his unwelcome head, following a practice of those early days when these islanders dropped boulders down upon the pirates who were attempting to regain the land below them. Indeed I feel that I am becoming very Italian.

On the other hand if we meet he may not

recall Siena, the little old ladies from England, and his *penchant* for buns. In that case I shall have to begin all over again. All this throws me into the mood of thinking of all my yesterdays, but before I can wonder about my tomorrows, I find myself outside the door of the Villa Minerva, over whose walls hang festoons of wistaria leaves, while mahogany-colored gilliflowers here lend an old-fashionedness to the perennial youth of even ancientry itself.

When I pull away at the handle, the bell inside fairly gurgles sound, and I hear pattering steps hurrying down a stone stairway, crossing a court, and, after some one fumbles awhile at the lock, I find myself admitted into an inviting little garden-court, just such a one as long ago good Messer Tasso, over there in Sorrento, might have loved to write about. Perhaps he did, for later I find out this old villa stands much as it did in his romantic day. Quite round the square of a court runs a brick patterned pavement, bordered by the garden, which is filled with gorgeous flowers; the fragrance of the Freesia blossoms of spring's fleeting days seems to haunt the summer of

this abode. Curiously it pervades everything. The lemon trees and the oleanders meet overhead, forming an arcade far lovelier than any made pergola, encircling a wizardish pear tree. I have no pear trees at Villa Giacinto, and instantly I know I must have one. There is no tree that quite takes its place in the whole land of romance. Whenever I see one I think of that old nursery rhyme I once learned out of a little book my Uncle Rufus remembered to send me on the occasion of my seventh birthday, an act that sent me into the seventh heaven of appreciation (of the book, I must admit, for as I have explained, I never knew my Uncle Rufus, and the sense of spiritual gratitude had not then been developed). It was the one time in his life that he had been known to do anything for anybody. I have afterward thought it was a mistake, a delusion he labored under, perhaps, that he might bargain with eternity, as did the old man who whirled into heaven on the memory of the humming-top. Perhaps he made me his heir on the same principle. It will always remain a mystery to me, and I begin to feel ashamed

of myself for being absolutely sincere in the matter. Indeed it is sometimes a temptation to affect sentiment on the side, and appear grateful, as I suppose I should, instead of accepting it all as a matter of course; and I doubt if any one on the face of the earth more needed to have his nest feathered than I did!

But I soon forget lemon trees and sour great-uncles, as the sprightly and hospitable lizards in their green coats skip like animated twigs from crannies in the gray old garden wall and scamper over to welcome me. I shall never forget my first repugnance to them; Vincenzo would feel the same about squirrels. But now I have come to love to watch these harmless little creatures, which means that I am becoming very much of a Caprese, though, by and by, I must stop my ears to the sweet voice of Doing Nothing, and become furiously busy with the things I have planned to do. I have to confess to myself that I am not a cup from the well-font of genius, since attics never inspired me as they did Oliver Goldsmith, and my book bills have always been enormous. That alone, since Walter Pater set the fashion

against it, is said to be a hopeless sign. So if I would accomplish anything I must work hard for it.

As I cross the court I remember Luisa told me this morning that Mrs. Delmar knows every one worth knowing in Europe, and I imagine Luisa is especially hoping I will find a Crown Princess or two here this afternoon. I hope nothing of the sort. I knew a Crown Prince once, and he seemed to me very much like a parcel sent home on approval; a Crown Princess would get on my nerves for pity at her stupid lot. Instead of sharing Luisa's ambitions for me, I have a foolish hope that I shall find the Contessa's sister at the top of these old steps I am climbing, to find her on the roof terrace, not, this time, waiting for a prodigal nephew, but with amused expectation, perhaps, of meeting her prodigal nephew's pet camel. I picture to myself her surprise and the fun we shall have over it; so, having thrown myself into the seventh heaven of anticipation, I am in a very jolly frame of mind as I mount the last step. A clandestine peep out of the tiny window near the top reveals the fact that

the villa's walls rise with the side of a miniature precipice; below one can look into a vineyard garden. I do not need to be told the *casa* is as old as European history itself. The spirit of its *genius loci* is everywhere in the air. I sniff with exhilaration. Then I find myself on the house-top.

VIII

WHAT Boston and the other attributes of her nativity have done for Mrs. Delmar are not disagreeably apparent; she is more like duchess or queen of fairy-story land. I say duchess or queen upon reflection, because every damsel under thirty I put in the princess class, every dame over eighty in the fairy-godmother one, which leaves me noncommittal about the rest.

The little touch of sadness in her quiet perfect eyes which I notice as she stretches forth her hand to welcome me, is the sadness of sorrow that can have had no regret. I imagine it is all one needs to say about the Lieutenant-Colonel. Her beautiful hair has just begun to borrow the whiteness of the snows of Etna; her voice is as silvery-toned as the song of a Tuscan girl, and yet as directly unwavering as the voice of a mother of emperors. Yet I would know her to be my countrywoman, though her manner is almost born to the ancient traditions

of the land, for there are certain subtle things — the realest ones, after all — that expatriation cannot obliterate.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Allen, you see I have heard all about you from the Norths," — I feign incredulity — "oh, but I have, very many times. I shall tell you all about it! And they say such nice things of you that you must be very good; in fact, quite so, to live up to their account of you. I am not just sure they do not expect you to be canonized or something!"

It is a gracious reception; besides, I am flattered to be suspected of sanctity a second time. However, I protest that I am merely respectable, and that my only cleverness consists in an ability to conceal my stupidity. We are at the tea-making point. I bless her for not interrupting with a "one lump, and cream? Or lemon?" question, as so many people do when one's conversation about one's self becomes particularly interesting. Indeed, I know of nothing in the world which so exasperates me, when I feel like becoming agreeably informative, as being checked by food questions over

table. So inwardly, as I chat on, I praise Mrs. Delmar's restraint.

"I once knew a person who was immensely clever, but his consciousness of it all really forced him to affect stupidity, because he had such perfect manners. This had the most depressing effect of making every one around him feel that a martyr was being adjusted to his environment, and I am not sure I did not resent it!

"Rather pathetic of him," I comment, "but a wretched sacrifice, don't you think, of every one concerned? I always say, if one is not satisfied with himself he has no business to be inflicting the rest of humanity by trying the made-over garment on them God probably thought was good enough for him as it stood in the first place. That is why a good, honest bore always finds a niche in society and is missed when anything happens to him; at least, he has not covered up his virtues for the purpose of annihilating conversation."

"Really, Mr. Allen, I believe you are a philanthropist!" I laugh to myself and think of my forlorn old Uncle Rufus. "You not only

are willing to lend your tolerance, but you give encouragement."

"Then I practise my philanthropy on myself," I suggest.

"Oh, but you won't need to," she laughs, "for you are a very good missionary, too, so with all contriteness I shall try to reform. Anyway, it would be selfish, would n't it, not to? You know, over here, bores are so rare that one almost forgets there ever were any; so when one comes along I have to be careful, very careful!" Her eyes are laughing at my pose of discomfiture, though I am very sure she guesses I feel wonderfully at home and am enjoying it all immensely. I look up questioningly. "I think," she adds, "I shall have to begin my own reformation by sending to have the Baron over for tea."

"Then you, too, do not like the Baron?" I ask, really a bit perplexed at this unexpected manner of bringing him up.

"Not like the Baron!" she exclaims. "Why, I adore him!"

"Then why make a penance of him?"

"Oh, but don't you see," she declares eva-

sively, "it is I who have learned better; besides, you know, he is the fiancé of my dear Francesca" —

"The Contessa's sister?" I interrupt.

"Of course you know her, then?"

I am half suspicious that Luisa and Vincenzo have been chatting with Mrs. Delmar's kitchen, to whom they are distantly related, and that the kitchen has been whispering things to the birds around Mrs. Delmar's roof-tree. But I repress my curiosity.

"I am a thousand times sorry, Mrs. Delmar, that I do not."

Then I tell her the little story of Giacinto, discreetly refraining from mentioning the balcony incident or from dwelling too much on the episode of the stair-landing. I do not wish Mrs. Delmar to imagine me a poet always tumbling head and heels into love, and then making verses about it. A poet I may be, but I am not head and heels in love with any one, and as I do not remember ever having wished to make a more sensible impression on any one than I do on Mrs. Delmar this very hour, I become circumspect in my narrative.

"And so, Mrs. Delmar, I have had a glimpse of the ladies through Giacinto's proclivity for unexpected pilgrimages to uncanonized saints!"

"What a darling he is!" she laughs. "Now I am sure I shall like you. You see, we have all discovered that Giacinto has the most wonderful faculty of sizing one up. So when we are in doubt we look to Giacinto, our oracle. He quite outdoes the Palladino."

"Is he always right?" I ask, immensely relieved to feel that I may have stood the test.

"And absolutely loyal," she rejoins, vastly amused to be taking tea with a camel. "And, my dear Mr. Cam—" she stops short in confusion and I burst out, somewhat rudely I fear, for she has begun with such seriousness the slip is ridiculously delightful. "Oh, Mr. Allen, forgive me, please!" and she looks almost frightened for fear my feelings have been hurt.

I maliciously accuse her of abstraction.

"How absurd and rude of me," she cries, "forgive me!"

"There is no necessity for forgiveness, dear

lady! I am taking it as an immense compliment to my prowess in magic, and you know the Beast turned into a prince after all."

"That is no reason why I should have called the prince a — a camel, even to gratify his vanity," she laughs. "Besides, I was thinking of the Baron."

"Oh, then I have a competitor?"

"Oh, I don't mean that, I only mean that because I was thinking of the Baron, I —"

"Don't try," I plead, like a mild and kindly patriarch. "It was unfair in me to be so frivolous about so serious a matter."

"The camel?" she asks mischievously.

"No, the Baron."

"Then you *do* know the Baron?"

"Awfully well," I answer, now almost certain she has known it all the while. "I once sat at table with him and watched him eat buns, — *all* the buns. The Baron's virtues are centred in his table manners. He has n't any."

She laughs again, pouring me another cup of deliciously brewed tea. "I'm afraid you know the Baron very well!"

She picks up her embroidery-frame and holds up a tangled mass of colored silks, seeking a thread of gold for her needle. "You see I might have been very useful to Joseph," she explains ingeniously, "instead of that I do not even emulate the good Comtesse de Bayeux. I simply embroider foolish little things against Caprese wedding times, for they love uselessness here, and adore such trifles." I cannot believe this in its literal sense, for Luisa has already told me all the wonderful things Mrs. Delmar is always doing for the needy and I have learned that many a little Caprese bambino owes its ability to appear in public in other than its birthday suit to my hostess's generous needle. However I cannot make her appear seamstress to the province by protesting with facts.

"The Countess Matilda," I can only say, "owes her fame to our sense of antiquity, while you, dear Mrs. Delmar, may owe yours to a sense of futurity."

She looks blankly at me, with a question forming on her lips.

"That was a very stilted compliment,

was n't it?" I say, trying to disentangle myself. "A phrase like a pyrotechnical set-piece."

"Which would n't go off properly!" She is amused by my confusion, which is real this time. I have to admit it is so.

"Did it mean anything?"

"No, it did n't, but I *meant* it to," I confess.

"I know it, and that is why I dared to tease you."

She takes up her silks again. "Do you know," she tells me, "I have a premonition."

I, too, hear a heavy shuffle across the court, for the bell was ringing a minute ago, and the gate has just clicked to.

"Yes? Of what?"

"That it is —" She pauses provokingly.

"Is —?"

"The Baron!"

I rush to the parapet and look over.

"It is!" I give confirmation with mock tragedy.

"Don't look so furious!" she urges. "I am *so* sorry!"

"Oh, but I am overjoyed, — that is, you

have proved yourself infallible in your premonition, only Cassandra at her superbest moment of prognostication could have foretold an event with more terrible accuracy!"

"But I really asked him yesterday! You see, I belong to every one in the afternoon!"

I remember Luisa told me I might meet many people here, and of course I might have known the Baron would be among them in so small a colony. I am still hoping the Contessa's sister will come. Then I hear the Baron's foot on the stair.

"You must have one of these little biscuit, Mr. Allen! Old Filiodori sent over from Sorrento."

Remembering the Baron at table, I fancy it is well to anticipate, and accept the cake with avidity. "Then I may stay?" I ask.

"You *must* stay," she reprovingly commands, "if only to prove that you are sorry, for, you know, I have told you I adore the Baron!"

I am still skeptical when, breathless, hatless, and commodious, the adored squeezes his way through the stair opening, and hauls

himself up the last step by reaching out for the rail with a mighty grip that threatens to overturn stone and mortar as easily as the hand of Samson brought down the ceiling on Delilah. The catastrophe averted, we sigh with relief and make ready to greet him. Expending his final breath in attempting a flowery greeting, the Baron is in a state of almost complete exhaustion as we are introduced. For me he has little more than a bow, betraying recognition. I read that in a pair of eyes whose pupils contract to look like a *Jagebund* target, such as one sees in poster illustrations.

"Mr. Allen," Mrs. Delmar explains, "has just come to our beloved island to live."

"Ah!" he splutters, incredulous of my being worthy so exalted a scheme of life. Evidently he has not heard that I ought to be canonized!

"Forever," I qualify. He must be made to understand that I have ceased to roam around with funny little old ladies from England.

The Baron has certainly drifted beyond fifty. His red-featured face is ponderously self-important in expression. His little ears,

small gray eyes that are framed in black-bowed spectacles, blanched hair just denied a pure state of benevolent whiteness, military shoulders with their hereditary shrug of intolerance, very short feet that are veritable parallelograms, a waist that suggests only hemispherical circumferences, a pudgy hand that leads me to believe the Uncle must be very slow at cribbage, and a *tout ensemble* which, had it been tinted with vermilion, emerald green, and gamboge would make him look like a German *Honigkuchen*, — these are the physical characteristics I find still clinging to the Baron.

"And you, dear Frau Signora Delmar, and you, you are most well on the housetop?"

"Oh, indeed, Herr Baron, I am very well." Mrs. Delmar answers as we are seated again, "you know I love sitting up here, where I can look over heaven, sea, and earth, better than anything in the world; that is, when such delightful friends deign to visit me."

"Oh, but I deign, I do deign, my dear Frau Signora Delmar, I deign most of any! I would deign all the time, but you, you would be so

tired to see your Herr Baron friend too many, not so?"

I think I have never heard such extraordinary English in my life. Moreover, the Herr Baron is evidently displaying it for my especial benefit. I hastily review the things he might have heard the little old ladies from England say about him, under their assumption that he was unversed in Anglo expression. I console myself with the thought that if his knowledge of the words enumerated by Webster is to be registered by the present indications I shall feel quite at ease if I ever find myself chatting intimately with the king of Cambodia!

"Adorable!" I murmured with affected irrelevance.

Mrs. Delmar looks at me with suppressed amusement.

"That it is what?" asks the Baron perplexed.

"The beautiful housetop, — the heaven, and the sea and the earth that Mrs. Delmar loves."

"And the friend she too do find to deign when

delightful," he adds, complacently pleased at his turn, "you too honor yourself much."

"I too am much honored, as you say, Herr Baron," I correct, — "moreover I have never had so fine a cup of tea in my life." This is the truth, yet the Baron's obliviousness to tact suddenly takes the form of a suggestion that I, in this case, can never have visited the German consulate on the Bosphorus. The appealing look from Mrs. Delmar restores me to my appreciation of the place asininity can take in cosmic involution. Just as he is tangling himself up in an intricate rhapsody of the superiority of the tea at the Consulate on the banks of the Bosphorus over every other sort of tea, no polite exceptions (sort of a floating anecdote, as it were, helped on by his decreasing the number of cakes from Sorrento), the gate-bell tinkles, and we know some one else is arriving.

"The Contessa and Francesca," Mrs. Delmar suggests.

"Ah!" cries the Baron, dramatically jumping up, "then I am all flusterings! It is the heart beat that springs goat-like on mountain-

peaked hope to watch down the stairs that excuses?" and with the agility of a pachyderm the Baron, tea-cup still in hand, is at the top of the stair peering down, leaving us to wonder what Goethe would have done with him.

"He is terribly in love!" whispers Mrs. Delmar.

"Terribly!" I answer, and she holds up a reproving finger.

IX

It is not the Contessa's sister, nor yet the lovely Contessa herself. Instead a remarkable-looking, tall, angular woman, for all the world like a Lombardy poplar bereft of its foliage, flits forth, to the Baron's confusion.

"Ah," cries he, noticeably recovering himself, "I beg my pardons! It is the Miss Winterspoon of cleverness! And I had suspected the Contessa and Signorina Francesca!" He sighs a little sigh of annoyance as he delivers this extraordinary measure of his natural tactfulness, but the Miss Winterspoon of cleverness, serene, smiling, and displaying remarkable powers of endurance in not being completely winded by her stout climb, appears not to notice the Baron's reservations. Instead, she gives him her mitted hand, which he, first discreetly swallowing the bit of biscuit he has just snatched up as solace to his disappointment, raises to his lips with a murmur that is

difficult to interpret, choked by the perilous passage of the biscuit.

"So gallant!" Miss Winterspoon cries, delight and affected surprise arching one eyebrow completely, and half the other. "A veritable Tristan, Mrs. Delmar, or was it Parsifal, Mr. Allen?" she asks as I am presented. I am inclined to think it was neither, but remain neutral to the possibilities of either hero. Then I am catalogued.

"The States?" I have shaken her hand instead of imprinting a kiss of peace thereon, (which means that I am discovered), so I proudly acknowledge her swift perception. "How jolly!" she declares as we sit down by the table again. This time the Baron picks out a chair especially near the cakes. "So jolly, you see, for I have known several Americans, Mrs. Delmar. Quite several, Mr. Allen, all enormously clever." She is thinking rich. The Baron looks wistfully down, — a fleeting moment only, — then brightens up wonderfully as the pouring begins and we start all over again.

"Oh, to see you drinking tea, Baron! Fancy

a German drinking tea and not coffee, dear Mrs. Delmar! Is n't it quite too extraordinary, Mr. Allen!" and Miss Winterspoon gives a shriek of delight that emanates from self-appreciation of her acumen.

"But then," I venture, "perhaps the Baron has learned to like tea, too." At which he glares at me less fiercely, though, perhaps, I imagine it.

"Ah, yes, Miss Winterspoon, I am pleased in tea too. I have now Englished myself so complete I take into me always tea too. Tea too, I like now more as coffee. Always ever afterwards it is a pleasure for tea too."

"Why, Baron," laughs Mrs. Delmar, "I never expected to hear you admit my favorite contention that the over-drinking of coffee is not good for any nation's nerves. Always to be dissipating with a coffee-pot leaves one continually high-strung!"

"Ah, that it is, dear Frau Signora Delmar, coffee in too much of a quantities leaves me much strung high. Tea it is wisdom to have learned to have taked — for your sake, Miss Winterspoon," by way of gallantry, which

flatters her immensely, "I prize myself yet always of a step in time saves sixes and sevens. I gather no rolls of moss!" The Baron is mightily pleased at the success of his felicitous fluency.

"Really, how clever you are!" Miss Winterspoon discovers. "Do you know, Baron, you Germans are ever a surprise to me! One never knows where your cleverness will pop out! One never does, Mrs. Delmar! Does one, Mr. Allen?" It is impossible to say, so I don't.

"Though," the ingenious lady continues, "I have a jolly good story about one who did n't have anything of the sort, you know, and you will not think me wretchedly rude, Baron? He was not one of your typical countrymen, you know, quite not. Instead, a most impossible sort of a person, Mrs. Delmar! You know, Mr. Allen, we have many just such English persons, and I dare say—but to go on." The lady takes a new start.

"It's rather an interesting tale, and I'm sure you won't mind, Baron." The Baron assents with a splutter of crumbs and pays strict attention to his third cup of tea and fifth

cake. (I love to keep count for those incapable of doing it themselves.) "So dear of you!" Miss Winterspoon goes on. "I knew you would n't. It came all about in this manner, quite extraordinary, Mrs. Delmar; very, Mr. Allen. It chanced that my aunt Alexandra and Lady Bagg, Mrs. Mortimer, too, I believe — such a poor memory, Mrs. Delmar; quite shocking, Mr. Allen! — were traveling out, last spring, from Florence in a railway-carriage and had the misfortune to be booked in the same compartment with an American." I look up unpleasantly, but catch the twinkle in Mrs. Delmar's eyes, so I make no comment. "Oh, quite something of a gentleman it seems. And it turned out to be no misfortune at all, but a bit of jolly good fortune! Quite a coincidence, Mrs. Delmar, and so unexpected, Mr. Allen." I have to be looked at again.

"And then," Miss Winterspoon explains, "the American was quite inoffensive; in fact, I believe Aunt Alexandra says he picked up something or another which had dropped from her tea-basket when there was a dreadful jolting of the train, — but I do not fairly recol-

lect. No matter. What was so frightful was the fact that at Empoli, or somewhere, a most odious person got in and insisted on squeezing into the compartment where there was no room for him. Aunt Alexandra always has to have her luggage on the seat. She is so nervous about collisions, and is uncomfortable without it is so. You know, dear Mrs. Delmar, how annoyed Aunt Alexandra must have been, and you can guess, Mr. Allen, — quite upset, in fact."

"Disagreeable things are apt to happen often." I dare not look at Mrs. Delmar, not yet at the Baron. I fear the tale carries a catastrophe with it, the early facts point to its familiarity.

"Indeed, yes; disagreeable things are apt to happen, and often, as you say, Mr. Allen. They *did* happen, and I am so sorry, dear Baron, it happened to be a German — but it only happened; you do not mind?"

"I do not pay any attentions at all!" declares the poor mortal, intending, however, to be magnanimity itself. "My own country peoples often is like Noah Arks" — he bursts

into a roar of laughter over his willingness to admit the faults of even his countrymen. "It is full of delight to hear you talk so many. I hark diligently to conclude." So Miss Winterspoon proceeds with this encouragement.

"Ah, then, a cruel tempest set in with wicked lightning and terrible thunder and all that sort of dreadful thing, — indeed Aunt Alexandra wrote me that the crashing even seemed to shake the railroad carriage rudely."

As I have often known Heaven's phenomena to act thus impolitely on occasions, I do not dispute the incident, nor anything else that may have happened to Aunt Alexandra and the other excellent ladies, so I am all attention. Instead I suggest that Italian trains move so slowly they might meet themselves coming back, and thus are the butt of the elements, but my theory is not considered tenable, so I leave it, to ask if it was the German tourist who caused the wrath of the gods? Mrs. Delmar looks over reprovingly, but I am saved by Miss Winterspoon.

"There!" cries she, "you too are clever like the Baron! Such clever people, Mrs. Delmar!

— But of course not, Mr. Allen; indeed, no! At least I do not think it was, though well it might have been had we been living in the age of belief in such things." (Miss Winterspoon's charm seems to be her literalness.) "Well, as I was about to say, just as Aunt Alexandra, and the others, arrived in Siena, the wretched German person piled into the only conveyance around the place, and drove off, leaving poor dear Aunt there in the rain, wet and furious. It was then the American turned out so especially gentlemanly. Indeed quite a Sir Walter, you know, lending his raincoat, umbrella, and all that sort of thing."

"A very useful sort of thing," I remark, reminiscently, with my eye on the suffering Baron. He darts a look at me, but I am immobility itself, much to his relief apparently. Because I am so sorry for him I suggest, "Perhaps, Miss Winterspoon, the German was ill, or did not see there were no other carriages."

"Nothing of the sort," waxes the lady, narrating; "he knew perfectly well, I fancy, — and that was not all." The Baron almost collapses as he hears this. "You see, they all

came together in their pension, and Aunt Alexandra, who never exaggerates — never, Mrs. Delmar; no, never, Mr. Allen! — wrote that but for the American gentleman — well, they might have starved." We all express amazement. "Indeed, quite! Starved, Mrs. Delmar; the German greedily ate everything, Mr. Allen! Everything within reach, Baron! Yes, quite positively everything!"

I feel my triumph is completing itself, but I know it is a wicked exultation, and try to change the subject to the latest opposition to monotony in the Reichstag. It only seems to remind Miss Winterspoon of the inexhaustible cleverness that "You know, Baron, he just happened to be a German." Then it is I cough from real apprehension, and am relieved to see the lady nodding acceptance of another cup of tea, as the Baron, alive to his peril, replies,—

"He makes himself sometimes a mistake," adding, by way of palliation, "when the thunder intenses danger."

I suggest that this puts the matter in a new light, but Miss Winterspoon is obdurate, and Mrs. Delmar so puzzled I see I must get some

hint to her of the situation, and grasp an opportunity, now that the Baron and the fair victor have come to an unguessed truce over Heine's exploits in Paris, to point mysteriously at my humble person and whisper, "It was the Baron and I." Mrs. Delmar cannot repress a laugh, and has just time before they take a listening turn again to suggest that it's almost a toss-up between us.

X

Miss Winterspoon, I find, is a person who develops rapidly. She has just startled us by insisting that as a topic of conversation the weather is wrongfully under the ban, that it ought to be a distinction to bring it up if only to depart from the commonplaceness of silence on the subject. I had not thought of it in that light before, and I am delighted to find Miss Winterspoon giving birth to the materials for an epigram, instead of to the narration of another anecdote. Finally, by this introduction, we happen to fall to discussing the proclivity of modern travelers to pick out sunless winter for their first journeys to Italy, thereby exhibiting a timidity toward the seasons that would never have taken Marco Polo anywhere. They are credulous enough to believe in a fiction that summer in Italy is an unfit season and that winter is the only time to be here. We remark that half the world has never guessed the joys of an Italian

summer, and we are thankful we are the other half.

Just as the Baron is about to enter with Wilhelm Meister's views on the subject, Heaven mercifully tinkles the bell of the garden gate. We seize it as an opportunity to escape from any such unexpected and dismal erudition, and fly to the parapet like curious children bent on seeing who is coming.

That is one of the advantages of living on housetops — you can throw roses down to your friends and roll down stones on your enemies just as you can from a mental one. But it is roses this time. There are great clusters of them climbing up here to peep over at us.

The Baron looks so doleful at having missed his attempt at Goethe that I cannot but take some measure of pity on him, wherefore, to alleviate the pangs of the interruption, I suggest that perhaps it is the Contessa and her sister. I know perfectly well it is, and so does Miss Winterspoon, who has wonderfully keen vision when she forgets her lorgnon.

There they are, crossing the court to mount the little winding stair, as Miss Winterspoon

and the Baron and I have done under Maria's amazingly agile guidance. I marvel that any one can conserve enough strength to be flying up and down all those steps all day long, as she must have to do, but her cheerfulness about it suggests that she may have served an apprenticeship to such feats of endurance by a girlhood spent near the old stone steps the Greeks carved in the rocks over there across the valley, up toward Anacapri. There are eight hundred of them, and they quite discount the three hundred sets Luisa attributes to the Certosa.

Presently a little ripple of laughter comes up the stairway, and, a minute later, the lovely Contessa's lovely sister and the lovely Contessa herself burst forth to view on the roof-tree like cherry-blossoms on an orchard branch, one in pink, the signorina Francesca, and one in white, the Contessa.

The Baron is in raptures.

"Ah!" cries he, "it is angels that is climb so high!" and then, having defined his admiration for the benefit of the anglicanly extracted, he greets the ladies in most excellent

Italian. In fact I am envious of his fluency, though his accent, I argue, will never equal my own, — some day. One has to find comfort in the abstract when taken by concrete surprises; I could never have guessed the Baron master, as he almost is, of a romance language.

How Italians, above every other people in the whole world, manage to tell you all about yourself in their eyes, and nothing they do not wish you to know, will always remain to me a mystery. And then how aggravatingly they can, just as quickly, become absolute strangers to even what is most obvious about you to every one else! Your Castilians or your Parisians use their eyes differently — they do not compel you to believe them; you cannot. I am thinking of the Contessa and her sister.

The Baron is still making bows and adding to his salutations a profound compliment or two. His bows are such fat, funny, springy ones I am reminded of my old theory that Germans have been given a set of hinges at the knees that have been denied ordinary

mortals. It has left them immune to rheumatism, but prevents their getting through a minuet.

"You make such a lovely picture, my dear," Miss Winterspoon begins, addressing herself to the Contessa's sister, "I was just saying so to Mr. Allen," — which is not fact, literally interpreted. However it is gracefully complimentary, and I love to bear false witness to defend generous impulses of verbality at tea-parties.

Miss Winterspoon draws aside dramatically and, presently, is in raptures again.

"Such a picture, Mrs. Delmar! Quite, dear Contessa, an allegory — Italia and Germania, you know!" Miss Winterspoon has made herself solid with the Baron. The signorina Francesca darts a mischievous little glance with those laughing lovely eyes at the Contessa, and I am wondering if I am not included.

No, I do not think I am. Perhaps Miss Winterspoon notices it. At least she turns to me.

"A lovely picture, Mr. Allen, for some Botticelli to paint!"

"Ah, it is divine paint, that Springtime of their Sandro, Fraulein Winterspoon!" — I have to turn my head and look out over the bay. Even Miss Winterspoon seems taken aback at the turn the Baron has given her compliment. The Contessa, however, who understands English very well (I find to my mortification), and her lovely sister's undisguised amusement, suggests that only the very warmest weather, in that event, could prevent us all from catching cold. I well remember how incongruous it seemed that winter's morning when I paid my first visit to the Academy of Florence, and came into the roomful of Botticelli's unclad nymphs. We were frigid with cold and wondered their noses did not turn blue. Although no other picture, to my mind, is so beautiful or so wonderful as the Primavera, nothing could induce me to visit it again until the thermometer crept up to seventy.

I add this observation of my own to the Contessa's sense of congruity.

"You know, Signor Allen," she says for my pains, abruptly turning the conversation,

which is considered quite polite in Italy, "I feel that we know you very well. You saved my wicked little Giacinto from bringing the family to utter distraction by restoring him to us. We were so frightened!"

"Signor Allen must know," the Contessa's sister laughs (I am startled by another revelation, — she speaks English as well as her sister), — "Signor Allen must know that Giacinto runs away every day, — *all the time*, it is his education." Her ingenuous way of perfect frankness is delicious.

"But not always so happily into the signore Americano's garden," the Contessa explains sweetly.

"I wish he did!" signora Francesca laughs. "I mean, if he would n't be too much trouble for —" she is forgetting my name, "for the signore —"

"Camel!" I add before she can remember. Mrs. Delmar reproaches me for heartlessness. Then I tell the story all over again, for I am guessing the Contessa Mamma will be interested in knowing just how I happened to be interrupting the *toccato* this morning.

"Ah, but we have heard it already," the signorina Francesca confesses. She is a bewitching tease. "Giacinto is mad about your garden!"

"And I, dear lady, am mad about Giacinto. I shall send him word by Vincenzo to run away every day!"

"If my uncle is forgetting to keep an eye on him he is probably there now waiting for you." I can see she wishes she had not just put it that way, for as the Contessa protests I venture to say,—

"That gives me a chance to prove how inclusive is my admiration for his entire honorable family — at least I shall stay on here a bit, even if Giacinto is there whistling for his camel."

"And the bon-bons!" the Contessa's sister unkindly suggests.

At this time Miss Winterspoon, who has broken down somewhere, but is mending herself with unexpected dexterity behind a jut in the parapet, reappears, twirling a bit of gilliflower she must almost have broken her neck to reach, as a visible symbol that her disap-

pearance has been but a quest for the beautiful, and not a matter of burstings and buttons.

"Ah," she catches, "Villa Giacinto? Charming name, quite! I do so thoroughly think it. Surely *you* do, Contessa!" A little fleeting look of sadness comes into the Contessa's beautiful eyes. I know she is thinking of her other Giacinto, her poor husband, and I am almost angry at Miss Winterspoon's blunder.

"I love my little villa, Contessa," I say, "and it is the flower I love best — hyacinth."

XI

ALREADY the color of coral and of amber has come into the sky. Old Vesuvio looms up over there like a chunk of uncertain chalcedony, and the rocks below us, touched by the sunbeams hurrying toward the lovely hour before twilight, seem streaked with agatine hues. Men and women in the vineyards sling their baskets over their shoulders, and the filled ones they balance on their heads. As they start homeward they burst into glorious song, — those *canzonette* of perfect contentment, perfect hope, perfect love, or again, perhaps, of absolute rebellion, boundless despair, or rankling hate. The folk-songs of the Neapolitans, the Sorrentini, and the Caprese are the only musical expressions of any people that precisely convey, even to the alien listener, a sense of every known human emotion, and of any human emotion in just the register of its depth.

"What a noise they make!" Miss Winter-

spoon breaks forth. No one agrees with her, — not even the Baron, for which I warm towards him. "Oh, if only they knew how to sing lovely hymns with those voices!"

"Or 'Tommy Atkins,'" I appear rude enough to suggest, safe, however, as the lady is complimented.

"How jolly!" she screams. "Is n't he a delightful wretch, Contessa? Indeed he is, signorina!"

Being a delightful wretch, I feel that I can scarcely protest at Miss Winterspoon's uncovering of my latent virtues, so I only reach forth for my hat, — it is time we were all going and the Contessa and her sister are just rising. Only Miss Winterspoon lingers, and my feeling of gratitude for her staying qualities is wishing it might include the Baron, but of course not. So I shall be denied the honor of alone escorting the Contessa and her sister home. But when we all reach the garden gate I find that the ladies utterly separate themselves from our protection, and I learn one more thing about Caprese etiquette, — this time it is the Baron who instructs me.

Clutching my coat-tail as I turn, surprised to be so suddenly dropped from such fair company, he whispers, unnecessarily, for even his *sotto voce* is like a fog-horn,—

"Ah, but my dear Herr Mister Allen, it necessaries to go by us alone together, else is not here etiquette without Signor Uncle!"

There is nothing to do, then, but wish there were a hundred uncles on the spot, and to saunter along with the Baron at a pace that will permit the ladies to arrive at their destination a minute and a half ahead of the time we shall be passing, thus averting the scandal of even appearing unconventional. The Medes and the Persians had a comparatively easy time of it. I suggest that, and the Baron asks me if it is true that ladies in America jump on and off of moving tram-cars, stop run-aways, stay out late nights, and do other interesting things. Never having run an asylum I am not in a position to teach things to idiots, but I do struggle to tell the Baron some of the things he ought to know. It seems to make him sorrowful, for, with a sigh of seeming disappointment, he shakes his head and says:—

"Too bad I have impressioned myself wrong in so excitings a things. I longer not do have hope now to needs to go to America!"

And I suggest that the journey is one fraught with fatigue.

At last we find ourselves in the little piazza. There is something about it that swells every man's chest as he enters its flagstone area, so tiny, almost, that the last comer is always the immediate centre of attention.

Of course Vincenzo was born here, and, I dare say, by now has fully had time to become used to such things, but as for myself, I feel funny at the knees and elbows, as though I were all wrists, when every one stops to stare at us and talk about us. The Baron, too, is self-conscious, and although he weighs a hundred pounds more than I have ever hope of doing, he attempts to hide his portly person behind my slender progress. However, it does not last long. Other new-comers follow to give us our turn, and, among them we find ourselves watching a long lanky gentleman who, I understand, travels around taking photographs of foreign places for his stereopticon

at home, where he tells his audiences nothing of real interest at the rate of a dollar a head for his trouble. He too has stage fright, until his *entrée* is superseded by the paid guests of the Messrs. Cook, hurrying steamerwards, unhappy, every one of them, to be hustled off as though, otherwise, they might not survive for another "sight."

So I leave the Baron, as our ways part, reflecting that we have happily escaped mention of the time we glared at one another across the board at Siena. And I flatter myself that though the Contessa's sister was very nice to him, she was very nice to me, almost as nice, barring her duty to Uncle Cribbage. At any rate I am in high feather. Any one with such adorable dimples, like the dimples of an olive, and with cheeks like sun-tinged apricots must know she is beautiful, if there is a mirror in the whole province. Should she look into one of those little pools, where the bathers love to puddle around, I am not just sure, remembering the story of Narcissus, I should not find a wondrous new flower there instead, — and yet I doubt if the dear lady

has ever had so conscious a thought of her own sweet self. Hers is rather the loveliness that has not discovered itself, that has no worry about itself, and that has no quarrel with itself.

I suppose the Baron will carry her off to Bavaria, put her bolt upright in his parlor, invite his family to view her from the hair sofa, and expect her to remain as exquisite as a piece of Nymphenburg porcelain. She will do nothing of the sort.

Ah well, Life weaves strange patterns in destinies, and I suppose I have no business to be attempting to unravel one of them before it is woven — or after. And yet who is the weaver? I know very well that Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos have had to take on apprentices since the world's handful of people was sown by Zeus in the garden of Earth, to increase as the seed scattered to the wind by the blown poppy.

I pass the little shop of Tessa Monceno, where Giacinto and I halted this morning on our way across the desert of to-day, and as I look back at the coral caravanserai I see

Tessa herself standing in the doorway, with a smile that shows her teeth to be as white as sea-foam, and her lips as pink as the wares she sells. She lifts her hand and dangles a wee bit of something on a chain twisted around her finger to tempt me. It is probably a bargain, but I have no heart for it, and I am thinking of other things. Anyway a camel has no need of such trifles, — a little bell around his neck to tinkle as he goes his homeward way, perhaps, but that is all. And so I turn away, thinking of the tinkling of the silvery voice I have heard again this afternoon, more mellow than any bell, sweeter than all the bells of Florence.

And, as I turn into my little gateway I find myself humming the sad little song they used to sing over on the hills of Ravello:—

Flow'r o' the rose
My heart heavy grows!
Flow'r o' June
My heart's out o' tune!
Shall every to-morrow
Voice song of my sorrow?

The evening air is laden with the fragrance of clove-scented pinks, a little gleam of light

from Luisa's kitchen tells me that she and Vincenzo are faithful to my home-coming, the savory odor of cooking things creeps to the nostrils, and the primitive in me is not ashamed to be reminded that dinner is waiting, — outwardly I am still a poet.

XII

Luisa is particularly mysterious this evening, — but it is not to be found in the soup-tureen. She is brimming with suppressed excitement, but it has nothing to do with the broiled chicken — *delizioso!* — nor with the macaroni, nor yet again with the *vino di Capri*. I am on the alert but I discover nothing.

"My padrone does not scold Luisa for the salad?" she asks, smiling until her teeth look as white as the pebbles of the *marina*. "It is *ver' fine?*" I am teaching Luisa something.

Of course it is very fine — exquisite, the sort of salad that would have taken Mohammed to Paradise, but will keep me here. One of Luisa's salads is worth living forever for, and I tell her so.

But it is not the salad. She darts into her kitchen, there is a rustling of crinkly paper, a whisper from Vincenzo, and presently Luisa radiantly appears with a great earthen dish

which she spreads before me to disclose the secret of her preparation.

"*Zuppa inglese, signore!*" she exclaims. "*Buona!*" I hear Vincenzo echo, smacking his lips. Luisa bursts forth in a volley of reprimand, and he slinks back from the sacred circle of my surprise.

In an unguarded moment, yesterday, I chanced to hint to Luisa that there was something in the cookery of my country that might be quite beyond her ken. If, perchance, a fleeting memory of a Thanksgiving dinner flitted across my mind it was only that I thought she would be entertained by knowing how her padrone had existed before macaroni came into his midst. I did, incidentally, dilate upon pies in general, and, as well as I could, upon several pies in particular. Yes, I could eat a whole pie.

"*Maraviglioso!*"

At least if it were a very small pie, and if it chanced to be a pie of respectable size — I could eat half a one.

"*Buon appetito!*"

Luisa might have known that!

But now that I have stuffed on *minestra*, on broiled chicken, on the wonderful salad, on *formaggio di Salerno*, on *fichi di Sorrento*, and have sipped the white *vino di Capri*, which sparkles in the glass like golden ripples on the sun-reflecting sea, Luisa sets down before me this elaborate piatta to my amazement and exclaims,—

"*Ecco! La vera zuppa inglese! Buon appetito!*" (Behold! The true English mixture! Good appetite!)

"Heaven be merciful!" I cry out *de animo* and *de corpore*. Fortunately I say it in English and escape hurting Luisa's feelings. She has already made an incision through the layer of whirlpools of confection posing as a crust, and, with the dexterity of a surgeon, lays bare to my ungrateful eyes such inwards as I had not dreamed the maddest cook out of Alice's wonderland could devise.

"See, signore!" Luisa cries, "it is the true pie *Americano!* Behold!" and with agile dexterity she has placed before me the full sweep of its radius from opposite points. I say a little prayer. I would rather die than hurt

Luisa's feelings, but I shall die and hurt my own if I attempt to gourmandize as a means of showing how delighted I am at the unexpected treat. Alas! too unexpected.

Moreover one bite convinces me that way would not be safe. It is as though marsala, maraschino, cognac, and everything man has ever distilled from the fruits of the land with which pudding sauces may be stiffened with discretion, had conspired to preserve the *zuppa inglese* before me for eternity, and if I take another mouthful I know I shall be liable to arrest for disturbing the peace.

Luisa seems bent on hypnotizing me into consuming it all. She relates in detail how it dawned upon her that Francesco Califano, the confectioner and baker, a pal of Vincenzo's, had once allowed her to have a peep at a wonderful *zuppa* he had made to the order of some visiting Americans. Never had Luisa seen anything like it.

"Ah!" Francesco told her, "that is because never before has one been made out of the land the signore Columbo discovered. Never before has confectioner of Italy been able to

do it. The Americans themselves have told me so. I have done it!"

Luisa is cursed with a perfect memory. "And that," I say, choking down a brandied cherry, a preserved fig, a sugared almond, and a bit of citron peel, faithfully united by an insoluble custard dyed purple and surmounted by my initials in paste, "and that, Luisa, is how you happened to think of surprising your padrone with his country's national dish?"

"That is just how, signore," Luisa beams, "that is the very way."

"You have been too generous!" I exclaim. In the far distance Vincenzo coughs an idea into my head. There is still hope!

"Luisa," I say, "never has your padrone seen so wonderful a pie, so perfect a pie, or so enormous a pie. In America the very largest I ever saw was this big" — I measure four inches along the table-cloth — "and the largest I ever ate was this big" — I indicate the diameter of a butter-dish.

Luisa is not quite convinced.

"So you see," I add, "I have eaten much

more of it than usual,—in fact, Luisa, much more than is polite. In America it is very impolite to eat so much pie."

"But this is not America!" Luisa protests.

"Ah no, Luisa! But I cannot yet be rude in Italy. Later, yes, perhaps, but now,—I am too new!" I affect to cast a greedy look at the terrible *zuppa*, and I am rewarded for my pains by discovering that I have done remarkably well by it after all, which eases my conscience a bit. So I insist on the rest being divided between Vincenzo and Luisa. I hear a sigh of relief from out the kitchen—Vincenzo has been listening—and Luisa, tempted, perhaps, by the restraint she seems to have exercised earlier in the evening in not abstracting portions of Francesco Califano's second masterpiece, succumbs to its allurements, and carries it forth to crown her appetite and that of the patient Vincenzo.

So I am left alone with my coffee—quite alone. The smoke from my cigarette forms a mist like *scirocco* settling down on Monte San Michele, only I can look through it across my little table. No one is there. Signor Tabacco

changes his mood, and into the web of Madonna Natura's misty tapestry weaves a woof of question-marks, whose pattern, gone in an instant, yet remains hauntingly in my mind, and I wonder if I too am a fleeting question on the threshold of To-morrow?

Why do all these things come surging into my thought? Why should I start at finding no one but myself sitting at the table before me, as though there were flooding upon me a new consciousness? How could any one be there? Why should any one be there? Is it because I am a poet? I laugh at myself, — but that does not explain it. I tell myself it is the fault of Luisa's *sorpressa*, — that too is ridiculous.

Perhaps a breath of air will banish this inexplicable solemnity that has crept into my soul, so I step to the window. The moon is like a disk of pale amber and everything in my little garden is softly lighted with color of the lime. A gentle breeze rocks the flowers to sleep, and plays a lullaby to them on the lute of the almond-tree, whose leaves rustle with mysterious music. The wondrous beauty

of the night banishes the melancholy from my soul and my heart leaps into song. Lo! as I stand breathing a little prayer to the angels of heavenly peace, the fragrance of the jasmine-flower creeps to me, and with its magic perfume conjures up the vision of her, there upon the balcony, there as she clasped little Giacinto to her arms, there as she laughed at me on the house-top, with those lovely mischievous eyes. My pulse throbs with quick, jerky little throbs it has never known before, her name comes to my lips, I am like a Titan who could leap from mountain to mountain, the whole world seems so tiny I could hold it in the palm of my hand. I feel that if I lift my arm I can touch the stars, — earth seems a thousand miles below me, and I know now why life is worth living.

XIII

THE sun and the sea are not to be denied this morning, and as the ever-thoughtful Vincenzo has bought a little bath-house in the name of his swim-loving padrone, we start forth to claim it, Vincenzo to show the way, I wondering if it will be like one of those huddling stumpy arrangements one finds over there at Pozzuoli, or a nice orderly, sombre one on wheels, such as those one finds lined up against the copperas-colored Adriatic like a regiment of gray-uniformed artillerymen, when he goes forth on Venetian territory for his morning plunge.

What a contrast I shall find to the Lido, where, on a summer's day, all of northern Italy seems to be bobbing in the sea, or spotting the shore with fluttering array of color!

Vincenzo leads me down a narrow winding way, walled with a concrete parapet that saves a misstep from plunging one to the rocks a thousand feet below.

"It was built by the poor German gentleman, the Emperor's friend, who died down there before it was finished." Vincenzo points to a villa built sheer into the rock like the nest of an eagle. "He loved the island, like the padrone, and he too was very rich." I am not, but I have given up trying to convince Vincenzo of the fact, so I do not interrupt him.

"You know, signore," he continues, "there did not use to be any way of getting down there — only by the road back of Monte Castello, and that a long way to travel. The poor German gentleman loved to look out over the sea from his villa terrace, and so, one day, he promised the Sindaco that he would pay, from his own pocket, for the building of the most wonderful path in the world, and he did. You will see for yourself, signore, how it was cut out of the very face of the rock. *Madonna mia!* What a noise those scoundrelly rascals from Sorrento made for a whole year with their digging, and their blasting, and their shouting! Only good Messer Nettuno himself knows how much money it ate up. But it is done, and the poor rich signore

Tedesco did not live to so much as walk out on it to see the sun glittering down there on the waves like the gold in his pockets."

It seems to me that the gold in the pockets of the poor signore Tedesco has, for once, softened Vincenzo's attitude towards the Teutonic race; at least the Crœsus of a road-builder, who made possible an eighth wonder to the world, seems exempt from the anathema he was pronouncing against the Baron and his compatriots but yesterday.

Never having known the poor rich signore myself I can only hope Vincenzo bases his estimate on the virtues of the Emperor's friend and not upon the vastness of his treasury.

It was a noble thing to have conceived and made possible this marvelous feat in engineering. A man could not leave a better monument to his memory than to have built a road.

I fall to contemplating its ingenious construction, wondering if some day in the ages to come curious tourists will be poking around amid its ruins, marveling, as to-day we marvel when we catch that first glimpse of the endless arches of the Aqua Claudia from the train

that carries us across the Roman Campagna. Will the world never cease tiring of its yesterdays, and then of coming back to pity them? Men call it History.

Then I reflect that nothing so proves the temper of a man as a good steep road — his willingness to go down being measured by a confidence in his ability to climb up again.

Already we have descended for the distance of a mountain's height. Somehow I feel that Offenbach must have dreamed of such a path when he wrote that immortal aria his Orpheus sings at the descent to Hades, though this way beckons to Elysian Fields, and brings another song into my heart to-day.

The vast precipices around are almost terrifying in their dizzy height, but grimly silent in their slavery to man's indefatigable mastership, — the true victory of his mind over their matter.

Below the sea gurgles and throws itself with patient aimlessness against the unyielding rocks that dash it into mists for the sun to coax up wherewith to slake the thirst of the parched heavens. It all seems so endless, so

monotonous, that I am foolish enough to wonder if Eternity is not becoming senile.

Vincenzo, noticing my abstraction, imagines I am indifferent to the wonders spread out before me, so I hasten to prove myself spellbound by all that stretches between heaven and earth.

"And there is my padrone's bath-house!" he exclaims, pointing below the last turn of the road. "*Ecco!*"

Now I am fond of the hues of the rainbow, but never did such a riot of color meet Noah's gaze when the great sign told him the Flood was past. Vincenzo's eyes sparkle with delight at my surprise — he has done it all — emerald-green roof, shell-pink sides, purple door, rose-colored shutters, ultramarine steps, all perched upon orange props. It is little wonder that the entire island is down there looking at it. A horrible timidity creeps over me, my knees seem to give way, and but for my tender-heartedness I should not be able to go on. But I must face the music — Vincenzo's is as Richard Strauss's to Handel's — the Elektra and Salome of bath-houses to all the conservative quietly attuned ones beside it.

Shall I be mobbed once I get in? That question comes to my mind. Or shall I step before the assembled throng and say, "Please step aside, my good people, and let me take off my clothes with what becoming modesty I may, in these surroundings of my chromatic possession."

If yesterday I was a camel, to-day I am a whole circus, but already Vincenzo is becoming suspicious of the sincerity of my appreciation, so there is no help for it. I press on.

Now is there another place under the sun, where my life would not have been made miserable in a like instance by a reception of grins and taunts and fun-poking? Instead some one has fastened a garland of flowers above the door, my new friends rush up to congratulate me on Vincenzo's handiwork, and, amazed, I am left peacefully to enter the sanctuary of my private bathing-pavilion, where, disrobing, I quarrel with my new bathing-suit because it is not peacock-blue with carmine stripes, — so quickly does man come under the spell of the suddenly unexpected.

XIV

When I emerge I step cautiously forth with restrained progress until I feel sure no wicked clam has buried his revenge in the deceptive sands underfoot. One does not like to make his aquatic *première* recklessly. However, my path seems wonderfully clear of sharp-shell obstacles, and there is nothing in the way of triumphantly skipping with lithesome step into the waters of the waiting sea. Nevertheless I turn to have one more look at my marvelous bath-house and to affect a rapturous "*Che bella!*" as Vincenzo's reward, wondering if ever the frescoes in the House of the Vettii had known such riot of color. Then I trot on.

There in the warm sand before me a group of loungers are resting. They have just come out of the water, and, as I draw nearer, a tiny Eros in a pink bathing-suit, looking for all the world like his birthday one, runs up to me as fast as his little legs can carry him — of course it is Giacinto.

"*Bimbo mio!*" I cry, snatching him up and perching him on the shoulder that took him through Tartary yesterday.

Then we race up to where our Contessa mamma, our Contessa mamma's sister, and our Contessa mamma's uncle are basking in the sun. Mrs. Delmar is there too. The Baron is nowhere around.

I suppose St. Peter spent a great deal of his time clad just as our ecclesiastical uncle before us is clad. I had expected to see him first in his chasuble. I suppose that is because modernity has mixed up one's ideas of such things with brocades and embroideries, as though God's beautiful air, sea, and earth were not fitting enough as vestments for even the holy men.

"Ah, Signor Allen," he cries as I am introduced by the Contessa, "I am so happy to hear that you have come to live among us. It is a true pleasure to greet you and to welcome you. Our little Giacinto has come to love you very much; my niece has probably thanked you for bringing him back to us after his little run-away yesterday — the Contessa

and Francesca have already told me of the pleasure of meeting you at our dear Mrs. Delmar's. Ah, but I fear you do not understand Italian, perhaps?"

I protest that I do, — marvelously well.

"You will have no excuse, now, Signor Allen, for not listening to dear Uncle's *very* long sermons, — I tried to warn you!" the Contessa's sister gives Don Enrico a mischievous pinch.

"Ah well," the uncle continues, "you are good to come down here to play with us. We are all little children this morning,—all of us."

"And there is no etiquette to force us to run home by sexes," I laugh, as I explain the terrible blunder the Baron saved me from yesterday. Of course I know very well that a wardrobe, every country over, dictates its precious customs.

"Your bath-house has made us green with envy!" Mrs. Delmar declares, as I deposit my precious burden on a little mound and we begin to cover ourselves up with the sand we let slide lazily through our fingers as though it were marking time in a glass.

Then Don Enrico shades his eyes from the lustrous sheen of the strand and begins a little story to entertain us. Giacinto's attention would put to shame the wriggling bored impatience of our own dear kiddies at home, but that, I suppose, is because Romance has not been born in their hearts—it only finds itself there some day.

"It was here, my children," Don Enrico begins "that Caius Octavius Augustus Cæsar, son of the Velletri money-lenders, touched foot upon our fair island. Hard by a withered old ilex-tree, bowed to the ground with its weight of years, and mourning because it no longer found itself decked with leaves, suddenly gave auspicious sign and lifted itself erect and green. When the Emperor heard of it he vowed never to let a year pass without a visit to the island. And so the Romans came to build here. They called it Apragopolis,—'Farniente town,' and some of us have been sweet-doing-nothing ever since!"

Giacinto is seized with an energetic desire to dig down into the sand to see if we cannot find a trace of the roots of this miraculous

tree. We do find a chip of wood, and I love Uncle Enrico for letting Giacinto believe it is a relic of the tree we seek. We do believe it. We shall always believe everything it is no harm to believe, and we shall be sure that every one who does n't is a wicked infidel. Our uncle smiles benignly upon us. Dear old christian-pagan, lovable old pagan-christian!

No, I tell myself, he does not dream that he is sacrificing that dear angel, — it does not occur to him that she will not be very happy with the Baron. But neither does it occur to her. There she sits, laughing at the little Conte's antics, indifferent on the very threshold of doom. The blood rushes to my head, I bury my hands in the sand, and clench them.

Then I wonder what madness is upon me that there should try to creep into my soul this fury against the things I may have no right to think of, surely no right to meddle with. After all, am I mistaken — can it be that I am blind to everything but myself? How do I know Francesca will not be happy? How do I know her life as Baroness von Wulff would be a grim prison to the spirit, a

tomb to the soul? How do I know this, — how do I know anything? I know! A little groan escapes my lips and startles me out of myself.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Allen!" Mrs. Delmar cries, "are you ill?"

"No," I answer, affecting a smile, "it is only a cramp!" I thank Heaven for inventing a vocabulary to confound the perceptions of others.

"I am not used to twisting up like a plate of spaghetti; it is all right now!" I jump to my feet and dig Giacinto out of his little hill. For a moment I catch the eyes of the Contessa. Then I pick Giacinto up in my arms and we plunge into the sea, to show our Contessa mamma what a little fish we are!

XV

We toil up the steep road on our homeward way, Vincenzo bringing up in the rear with our bathing things, turning, now and then, for another satisfied look at the far-carrying gorgeousness of his handiwork. I only hope some band of admiring pirates will not kidnap it and carry it to Naples, where, some fine day, it might do honor to their museum alongside the paintings they have ripped from the classic dwelling of M. Lucretio Flam. Martis, whose usefulness as *decurion* was terminated by a lava-stream.

Pink-petaled roses fringe our path, and I stop to gather a bouquet for the Contessa. Francesca is ahead with Mrs. Delmar, and Don Enrico is telling us the story of the poor Empress Julia Augusta— *Yacinthi Juliae Augustae*, it reads on the sarcophagus which now serves as a watering-trough on the terrace of the little hotel at the Marina Grande. The thirsty ages have little use for memories!

Presently we catch up with the two ahead, and little Giacinto, who has been singing to a butterfly, darts like a little humming-bird between us and takes the hand of his auntie Francesca in one of his chubby own, and, before I know what is happening, my own in his other. Then the darling little imp tells us he loves us. The Contessa's sister stoops down and kisses him, while I feel very embarrassed and silly, though nobody pays any attention. Yet, as I look up, I see the Contessa, with her head buried in the bouquet of roses I have given her, and there a glint from under her beautiful lashes makes me imagine it is a little tear.

At this moment we hear a clattering above us, a laugh like Woton's, and a little shriek, as Miss Winterspoon, perched on the homeliest little donkey I have ever seen, adroitly maintains her equilibrium at the sharp turn ahead, balancing a pea-green parasol in mid-air in a manner reminiscent of the graces of circus-ladies on tight-ropes. At her side trots the Baron puffing like a porpoise, but in a state of good-humor surpassingly becoming

to him. Behind follows the invective Agata, donkerina of the Via Mongiardino, whip of green broom in hand, driving, wheedling, pushing, and cajoling Rocco, her beast, to proceed less obstinately with his fair burden.

Evidently we are an attractive company, for Rocco makes at us with break-neck speed, while the terrified Miss Winterspoon clings desperately to the pommel. The gyrations of the pea-green parasol would wig-wag an army to its destruction, and are only brought to a finish by Rocco's determination to conclude his journey on the spot. That is how Miss Winterspoon comes to be cast into my fortunately handy arms as Rocco stiffens his front legs and loosens his back ones in a manner that amazes even Agata. The Baron is wedged between rock and donkey-ribs — Giacinto jumps around in high glee, Don Enrico attempts moral suasion, the Contessa rushes to help me with Miss Winterspoon, and Francesca gives us a warning just in time, as Rocco, changing his mind, plunges forward and disappears down the steep path, while Agata, in what appears a frenzy of rage,

rushes upon the poor, squeezed-up Baron and demands a huge sum from him in compensation for her mortification. The Baron regains just breath enough to protest, but Agata is obdurate, and insists that the buttons down his portly front tickled the sides of the recalcitrant Rocco at an unseasonable moment, and the damage would be worth to her a hundred *lire*, if Heaven let her off that easily.

At the mention of a hundred *lire* Miss Winterspoon regains herself completely, and in the course of her appeals to Don Enrico to restore one of his flock to reason, it develops that Agata has already victimized the lady in similar passes. Indeed, having the only beast of burden on the island, and Miss Winterspoon being obliged, from her dislike of walking, to patronize a monopoly, Agata has been able, heretofore, to exact her extortions with impunity. Giacinto has dragged the whip of broom over to where we are wrangling, for Agata in her spasm cast it aside. Lo! at the tip nestles a sprig of well-tied bramble of telling possibilities. Don Enrico discovers it, and with this damning evidence of Agata's eye to

business confronts her to her rout and confusion. We leave her humble and penitent, but Don Enrico confiscates the cause of Rocco's changing his mind, and tells me he thanks Heaven Agata is not a born Caprese to bring shame upon his people.

"Never was I so astonished in my life, Don Enrico! Never, Mr. Allen," Miss Winterspoon gasps. "I was just telling the Baron that I never could understand why Schopenhauer chose to eliminate certain transient speculations from his scheme of æsthetics, when that terrible donkey trotted up at a prodigious speed, and then all the rest was a blank until I found myself in Mr. Allen's arms, — and you bending over me, dear Contessa, and you, dear Signorina Francesca, — what presence of mind!" The parasol is a wreck, but the good lady clasps it to her breast as she looks over the parapet to see what she has escaped.

"I nervous me not at alls!" the Baron explains. "Between two evil choose not any! So I stand me mute, hoping danger to pass."

"It did," I suggest, "like a whirlwind."

"What a pity, — I was bent on seeing you

in swimming, Mr. Allen! And now it is too late, and I am completely upset!" I doubt if the lady realizes what she is saying, and I blush as I see the amusement on the faces of Mrs. Delmar and the Contessa.

"You know," the Contessa explains, "the Baron is very timid on the water, and frightened to death in it. Nothing can induce him to go swimming, and as he finds it uncomfortable to sit around on the sand, he rarely comes down."

"Ah, but I watches from on high, Contessa!" and I find that he has no qualms about using his field-glass whenever he wishes to.

The Contessa's sister walks along by his side, but hardly seems to notice what he is saying. He hands Giacinto a bit of chocolate, and I find myself quite put out that Giacinto devours it gratefully — youth is always such a commentary upon itself.

At last we reach the crest of the cliff, where a pink villa shelters a red revolutionist, and a Russian hound bays out at us from behind the barred gate. The Baron gives him a wide berth, and I think Francesca notices it. Vin-

cenzo tosses him a biscuit from the pocketful we had taken along to munch on the way, and he swallows it, wagging his tail for more.

As we walk along the Baron goes into raptures over Miss Winterspoon's cleverness in knowing the veriest depths of Schopenhauer. He too has been mad over Schopenhauer these many years. Francesca must read Schopenhauer — he will get her the book.

"You were very late this morning," is all she says to him. "Mr. Allen has been taking such good care of us!"

My heart gives a jump, and I turn my eyes to her, but she is still looking down. Then Giacinto scrambles up to my shoulder again and we say very little for the rest of the way.

XVI

Miss Winterspoon has invited us to stroll out the Via Tiberio this afternoon to see Carmelina do the tarantella, and after that home with her for tea. So I tell Vincenzo and Luisa where I am going, as I pick a white gardenia for my buttonhole.

"But it will be no use, signore!" Luisa declares. I look up wonderingly. She blushes and edges away.

"Why will it be no use, Luisa?" I ask. She runs over to Vincenzo and whispers something in his ear, then hurries into the house. I drop the flower I have picked, and stand mystified. Vincenzo begins to fuss with the vines.

"What is the matter, Vincenzo? Why are you and Luisa so mysterious? What is there to prevent our going to see the Carmelina and her young *sposo* do the tarantella?"

"Nothing," Vincenzo replies, with a funny little lift to his shoulders, "nothing at all, only—" He pauses to aggravate my curiosity.

"Only what, Vincenzo?"

"Only," he explains, "that Messer Stork and Donna Terpsicore are not friends!"

"Oh," I whistle, "so that is it!"

"Yes, that is it," cries the honest Vincenzo, greatly relieved that I am no longer obtuse, "and it is a girl!"

Under the circumstances I can see that Miss Winterspoon will be doomed to disappointment. I can only hope some one will have broken the news to her by the time I reach the house, that this interesting opportunity may not fall to me. However, I am behind the hour, so I pick up the fallen bud and put it in my coat, Vincenzo hands me my stick of olive-wood and my white hat, and under the verbal seal of his approval I stride forth with fortitude to meet duty and Miss Winterspoon face to face.

I find the lady thoroughly recovered from this morning's adventure and in a state of coquettish hospitality.

"You are such a nice man to come, Mr. Allen! And I dare say he would n't bother with an old maid if you and the Contessa

and the signorina Francesca were not to be here, Mrs. Delmar!"

I chide her for her heartless cruelty and tell her I would throw myself at her feet if I could find them — she does happen to wear small shoes, even for English ones, — and so her fan hides the remark that we men are naughty flatterers.

Miss Winterspoon is marvelous to behold this afternoon. She wears a gown of whitish homespun, cut like a Mother Hubbard that had decided to lead a better life, and the lines nature neglected to give her are suggested by a leather girdle, such as ladies who long for temperaments purchase from arts-and-crafts shops in our own fair country. Around her neck is a ribbon of black velvet, on which the entire mechanism of a watch of King George's time is strewn out, and ingeniously fastened so it will not scratch her. On her head rests a tawny-colored straw hat trimmed with orange chiffon, much the worse for a freshet or two, but decisively jabbed in place by coral ornaments. At her waist reposes (if anything so gay could repose) a huge bunch of zinnias

of every characteristic color from brick to sassafras. I had no idea these flowers tormented any gardens in the world outside of the marigold runs of my own, and for the moment the sight of them makes me homesick. Then I remember something Miss Winterspoon does not know, and seize my chance.

"I dare say, Mr. Allen, it will be a treat for you to go out to see Carmelina. Don't you fancy so, Mrs. Delmar? I hope the others won't be so very late."

"Of course it will be a treat, Miss Winterspoon," I declare. "I have heard all about her, and I want to see the baby too. I love babies!"

"The baby!" they both exclaim.

"Why, Carmelina's, of course," I inform them; "I thought you knew, and that we were going out to help at the christening or something! It's a girl."

Mrs. Delmar bursts into a ripple of laughter as Miss Winterspoon puts up her purple fan to hide her embarrassment.

"How dear!" Mrs. Delmar laughs, "I am crazy to see it! How did you know?"

Then I make up a story, and tell it accord-

ing to the improved methods handed down by Ananias.

"Fancy!" screams our hostess with a little blush, "but how upsetting!"

I suggest that it need not be upsetting at all, and Mrs. Delmar quite agrees with me. We are both for making a little pilgrimage of congratulation to the happy Carmelina and the proud Gervasio. We shall take Carmelina a bouquet, and I shall put a gold-piece in the middle of it for the bambina. So Miss Winterspoon and Mrs. Delmar begin to pick the flowers and I to hunt in my pockets for the gold-piece. Presently it is found, and we tie it in a bit of ribbon Miss Winterspoon has sacrificed from her toilet.

"How darling, quite!" she exclaims, "and I fancy we shall have all sorts of sport over it. You are so unlike, Mr. Allen! Is n't he, Mrs. Delmar!" I suppose she means original.

At this moment the Contessa arrives, — alone.

"Oh, I am so sorry we have kept you waiting," she cries as she greets us, "my uncle will be here in a moment, but poor Francesca

has a troublesome headache from the sun this morning, and asks me to excuse her. She is so sorry, and greatly disappointed."

Before we have a chance to inquire further, Miss Winterspoon's maid hands her a note which has just been delivered by the urchin who stands at the gate. Miss Winterspoon reaches for her bag, but I hand the boy a soldo and he is off, leaving her to glance at the note.

"You will excuse me, I know. It has just come from the Baron." She holds it a moment and a funny look spreads over her features. "Oh, dear!" she cries, "it is quite too bad! Baron von Wulff has just had a telegram from Naples, and in consequence must take the afternoon boat over, so he cannot be with us." The Contessa takes Mrs. Delmar's hand. "It is quite too bad," Miss Winterspoon repeats, "quite. — But here comes Don Enrico!"

That good old soul steps through the garden gate and explains that the troubled soul of Andrea, whom he has met on the way, demanded a bit of advice, and therefore delayed him a moment. I look at him closely, but as

he takes my hand I see only a smile upon his kindly face. Then I turn to the Contessa, but she speaks first.

"We too have heard the news, and Mrs. Delmar tells me of the lovely surprise for Carmelina. It will be great fun." She smiles like a madonna of Raphael's, but with even a deeper touch of sadness than I have noticed before. If she has been telling Mrs. Delmar anything, that dear lady does not betray it. Mrs. Delmar, I have come to learn, is the Contessa's dearest friend. Then I turn to Miss Winterspoon. Whatever may be turning in her mind, the lady conceals it nobly. Indeed, however extraordinary she may be in some ways, she can baffle man with her handling of womanly instinct, as Heaven intended every woman should baffle him. And so my opinion of her goes up, though I am none the wiser. Then Francesca's indisposition — which something tells me is only an excuse — and the Baron's sudden trip to Naples may only be coincidence, — I look at Don Enrico quietly chatting there with Miss Winterspoon, as we make ready to start onward, —

still my heart is troubled, and as we wend our way towards the road wicked old Tiberius was wont to traverse, I find I am asking myself a thousand questions about the Contessa's sister, until our arrival at Carmelina's throws me, for the moment, out of my abstraction.

XVII

Any timidity I may have had in approaching Carmelina's little house with a whole band of well-wishers, merrily led forth by Miss Winterspoon, quite vanishes under the spell of that lady's spryness, which shows how independent she can be of either Rocco or Agata.

In my innocent way I have been wondering if Carmelina's baby will be brought out by its agile old grandmother for me to hold. Now I adore babies, and Italian babies especially, but never am I able to shake off a feeling of terror lest they break in two in my arms, or slip and turn inside out. I am not a good crib.

So I cling to the hope that Don Enrico, with his years of christening experiences, will help me out of any such dilemma, and I edge over to his side as we turn abruptly around the walled corner of the ragged old road, and find ourselves at Carmelina's very door.

"Ecco!" cries Don Enrico, "Pare molto superba!"

There — in a chair by the steps — sits the wonderful Carmelina, proud indeed. She is gayly attired in her holiday gown, hair beribboned, the great gold rings in her ears shining like the glistening teeth her smile discloses, while to her breast she clasps a tiny bundle of breathing humanity, swathed in yards of such stuff as I saw in the little passage of San Stefano's. By their side stands Gervasio, the happy father, and Santippe, his old mother, who looks as though she might have mingled her years with the traditions of her name, though now her arbitrary old countenance is wreathed in smiles of antique pattern. Well might she have stepped out of Michelangelo's Last Judgment or have been a Sibyl tumbled out of the Sistine ceiling.

"Buon' giorno, signori!" cries Gervasio.

"Buon' giorno!" Carmelina's soft voice echoes over her baby.

"Bu' gio'!" squeaks Santippe, at us, and we are made welcome by all three as we group ourselves on the steps.

Carmelina is very much touched by our bringing the flowers. Indeed I am surprised to find that both she and Gervasio seem to regard the gold-piece with secondary appreciation, though their old mother seems to regain her youth at the sight of it, and nimbly runs up the steps inside to carry it to a place of safety.

Presently she returns with a bottle of a wicked-looking *liquore*, a basket of green artichokes, and a plate of *frutti di cacto*. We nibble at the artichokes, swallow the syrup-like *liquore*, and devour the cactus fruit, which combination acts upon the spirit of man like the nectar of ambrosia, while Miss Winterspoon becomes delightfully spontaneous.

"Is n't it a little dear! *Mio tesoro*," she reads, woven into the strip of pink-and-white cotton cloth wound around the bambina to make her grow up straight as the stem of a daffodil, "*Mio tesoro* — I suppose that means 'my treasure.' Quite poetical, — like Dante or something."

While I fail to fathom the allusion I become much interested in the darling bambina, and

I am getting over my first surprise at Carmelina's prowess. Of course I should have remembered that the peasant ladies of Italy become ancestresses one day and go about their household affairs the next.

"*Sono molto contenta!*" says Carmelina, and very happy should she be with that blessed babe. "Would you like to hold it, signore?"

Before I can say a word the infant is put into my arms. I try to conceal my trepidation. If an ordinary baby is hard to hold, when you don't know how, and you never can know just how with some one else's, a little Italian one all wound around like a spool is just as difficult a problem, for you feel that if you should let go of any part of it an instant it will roll out of your arms like a ball.

But it looks up in such a nice quiet cooey way that I forget to be frightened, and before I know it I am getting on famously, to the delight of Carmelina, the amusement of Gervasio, the distraction of Santippe, and the entertainment of the rest.

"I really think, Contessa," I remark, "that Italian babies are the dearest babies in the

world and that Caprese babies are the loveliest babies." She smiles, pleased, and tells Carmelina what I have said.

"That is why I came back to my own dear island when Giacinto was born," the Contessa says simply. "I wanted my little boy to be a born Caprese."

"He is a born angel," I tell her, "*un angelo piccolo!*"

Don Enrico, who has been listening, laughs until his jolly sides shake. "And so he is always flying away into new gardens to be brought home to his own *paradiso* and his distracted mamma!"

His distracted mamma and I both laugh, but Mrs. Delmar agrees with me, and Miss Winterspoon would too, were it not that she is holding an animated conversation with Santippe on her finger-tips. Whenever Miss Winterspoon meets any one unequal to interpreting her fugitive bits of foreign phrases she resorts to a sort of deaf-and-dumb sign-manual, which, if it fails to clarify doubt, at least keeps both parties to the event well occupied.

"How I wish the signorina Francesca were here, Contessa!" I venture, almost with a guilty sense of prying into the reason of her staying away.

"She would love to see the signore Americano sitting there like a Caprese *padre*, so solemn, and worried for fear it will drop!" laughs the Contessa. "You have held the little *bimba* long enough for a bachelor! Here, let me take her!" She darts a teasing little look at me, which makes me recall those eyes and their mischievous fun at my expense yesterday on the house-top.

"And don't you think I would make a very good Caprese, Contessa?" I ask boldly.

"You might," she replies.

"Oh, my dear Contessa!" Miss Winterspoon interrupts. "Indeed he could! Is n't Mr. Allen clever, Mrs. Delmar? Don't you agree, Don Enrico? Who else but one with the heart of a Caprese would have thought of the bouquet?"

"Or of parting with a gold-piece!" Mrs. Delmar concedes — a pretty compliment to all of us.

"By the way," Don Enrico asks me — we have risen to go — "do you play cribbage?"

For a moment I am overcome with confusion, which happily no one notices, and I stammer out, "I love cribbage."

"Then," cries Don Enrico joyfully, "I shall look forward to some pleasant passes with you; I too am very fond of cribbage!"

"And poor I," declares Miss Winterspoon, "know only the game of croquet, which one is denied here, Mr. Allen, for the balls would skip the wickets, you see, and roll quite down hill over the people's heads and things. At least I fancy so, don't you, Mrs. Delmar? Or have you never had it, Contessa?"

I am happy to learn they have never had it.

XVIII

The Contessa, Don Enrico, and I walk slowly home, after we have lingered for tea with Miss Winterspoon. Our path leads around Monte San Michele. Through the breaks we catch glimpses of the bay, thrown like a bouquet of violets against the lavender sky, before which Monte Vesuvio stands cut in purple silhouette. A tiny tuft of cloud, tinted with the color of rose-petals at dawn, blows across the horizon as though it were to pillow the tired sunbeams that soon will be asleep in the cradle of heaven.

We chat about many things, and are silent about many more. For a while we walk along without a word passing our lips, communing with the spirit of eventide, glad that the gods have let us know how good it is to live.

We part on the little Piazza, and Don Enrico promises to bring the Contessa and Francesca to see my little garden.

"You shall dine with us on Giacinto's *festa*

day!" Don Enrico exclaims, and the Contessa hastens to extend the invitation, much to my delight. Well do I know how great the honor is, and my heart fills with grateful joy that I am to be the guest of these dear people. Their perfect courtesy is mingled with that sort of sincerity which touches the stranger's heart. Of course I promise to come, and I think they see how happy I am about it.

"Buona sera, Signor Allen!" they call back. "Buon' appetito!"

"Buona sera, Contessa! Buona sera, Don Enrico! Grazie tante! Buon' appetito!"

But I am not thinking of the *pranzo*, though I have no doubt I shall do justice to Luisa's *arte culinaria*, for I saw Vincenzo smuggling in some tempting pineapples before we started out this morning.

No, for once I am not thinking of my stomach. Instead I look around to make sure that no one is watching me, and with a guilty sense of being up to something fearfully wicked I step into Carlo Trama's, and ask if he has cribbage-boards to sell.

I breathe a sigh of relief to find that the

good Carlo does not seem surprised at my question. But alas! though he has a very excellent statue of Pompeian bronze that would look very lovely in the signore Americano's villa, an excellent booklet of "Comparaative Idioms" that would help the signore Americano over many a hard road in acquiring a fluent command of the excellent language, he has not, he is mortified to confess, a single cribbage-board left that the signore Americano would consider looking at, — in fact he has none at all. Such worthy trifles are likeliest to be had at Michele Cerrotto's, across the way. Michelucchio will be sure to have one. Will I look there? I will.

"Buona sera, signore!"

"Buona sera!"

Michele Cerrotto has a very fine cribbage-board, indeed the finest that has ever been brought over from Sorrento.

"See!" cries Michelucchio, "it is made of as many pieces as there are olives on a tree. It is the signore's for a mere trifle." He proceeds to wrap it up.

"But how much does it cost?" I ask.

"But a nothing, — the signore will laugh when I tell him, and wonder I can be so honest and live! It is twenty lire, signore, — only!"

Twenty lire for a cribbage-board! But it is true it has as many pieces as I can count in an hour, and it is very wonderful, and very beautiful.

"But will it cribbage?" I ask Michelucchio.

"Will it what, signore?"

"I mean will it work all right?"

"Oh, signore, a cribbage-board does not work, — the signore works it. *Certo* it is all right. Come, I will show you!"

Then he sticks all the little red and white pegs into the little holes drilled in the ivory pieces so skillfully inlaid.

"Who moves first?" I ask.

"*Mai si è udito!*" cries Michelucchio, waving his hands in the air. "Can it be that the signore is so like a little child that he does n't know he has to have the playing-cards too? *Ecco!*" and he brings forth from its gaudy recess a pack of astonishing bits of brilliantly stamped cardboard. "You see it is this way,"

and he explains, as inwardly I groan, comprehending nothing. The fair knowledge of hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs diligently acquired over enforced bridge is as a problem in subtraction to one in infinitesimal calculus compared to the bewildering things Micheluccchio has spread before me. In the first place, although he insists they are playing-cards and that he had never seen any other sort, to me they are like a miniature set of split animals such as used to be given me to piece out to keep me quiet when the lungs and heels and elbows of my first six years wanted exercise.

It is true there seems to be some system of spots printed on the faces, but some spots look like ornaments on Christmas trees, others like nutmegs in sunbonnets, and so I give up in despair, for I cannot make anything out of them.

"*Fra un mese*," Michelucchio insists, "the signore could learn to out-play the whole island, so quickly would he learn after the start!"

A month seems a long time, but the cards are cheap, so I bid Michelucchio put them into the parcel.

"Buona sera, signore!"

"Buona sera!" I call back, and I hurry home, determination written upon my brow, though inwardly I am discouraged that the inventor of cribbage should have insisted on so many pegs or on cards at all.

I am not a moment too soon, — Luisa insists that everything would have been burned to a crisp if I had stayed out in the dreadful night air a minute longer. Later she and Vincenzo will be sitting out on their little terrace, and Luisa will be forgetting all her terrors for her padrone's carelessness in sticking his nose out of doors after sun-down as he always has done and always will do, and as every one else on the blessed island seems bent on doing too.

After dinner I call Vincenzo into the room and explain to him that I have a great desire to familiarize myself with the customs of the country, to which end I have bought a pack of his curious playing-cards — I carefully conceal the cribbage-board — and that he must teach me how to use them. His eyes lighten up, and we begin on the spot.

It is wonderful how much one may learn under the guidance of an enthusiasm like Vincenzo's. Michelucchio might have sold me everything he had ever had in his shop, but he could never teach me to manage a pack of Italian cards so I would not be cheated out of every trick before I had learned what was trumps.

I get on so famously that I become bold enough to bring forth the cribbage-board, but I do it in such a manner that I am hoping Vincenzo will not guess I have not had it always.

He guesses nothing of the sort. Instead he turns it over, and there on the bottom finds pasted a blue and gold label, "Michele Cerrotto e Figli," across which is written the price in Michele Cerrotto's undisguised chirography.

Vincenzo smiles.

"What are you laughing at, Vincenzo?" I ask.

"I laugh, padrone mio, that Michelucchio can earn so many lire in a day. He is a clever one. But it is a very good cribbage-machine,

a very good one." I am pleased with his approval.

"Then you must teach me to play cribbage, too, Vincenzo!"

"*Mi 'spiace moltissimo*," he cries, "but the signore must forgive me, — it is the only game I never learned!"

For once the gods have been unkind! Almost crossly I express my amazement at Vincenzo's deficiency, but his profound regret that the signore padrone does not play the game either, properly restores me to amiability, at least outwardly, for inwardly I am still swallowing my disappointment.

"But I shall try to learn it for my signore," Vincenzo pleads, "and when I have learned, I shall teach all that to him!"

"*Bravo!* Vincenzo," I cry approvingly, with a sincerity that ought to make him sit up nights until he has mastered the intricacies of the little board and its little pegs.

As there is no hope of working it out by ourselves, Vincenzo gathers the precious mystery to himself, while I step forth to saunter in the moonlight.

XIX

The Emperor Augustus had old Thrasyllus to tell the stars for him — I can only gaze into the heavens of the night, as I stroll out to the Punto Tragara, and ask myself, "What of to-morrow?"

Here I may look down upon the rocks of the Faraglioni, standing sentinel to the tiny port below. Here stood the palace of the proud Augustus nineteen hundred years ago, and a man's lifetime more. Not a trace of it can be seen, and with it the whole band of astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men have vanished.

The moon is cut like a creamy disk against the velvety dome of Night's impenetrable color. My shadow shifts like a spirit that is being trampled on, and the eyes of man can see the edge of nothing.

A little boat, like a bit of jet, passes silently across the yellow streak thrown upon the rippling water, and I wonder to myself what it can be doing there. Just like that the old

Saracens stole over the waves in their boats, one by one, to pounce upon the island. Down there, too, the Roman galleys used to be moored, tied to great iron rings driven into the rocks. The place has all the mysticism Arnold Böcklin would have loved, and holds one with its haunting beauty.

I turn and find my way down the steps and path that lead to the little *scala di sbarco*. Just above I seat myself on the jutting rock, and listen to the music of the night. To my surprise I find I am not alone. There by the strand stands a strangely clad boy with a wreath of flowers bound around his tangled locks. He wears a long flowing robe, and sandals, though at first he appears barefoot. He pays no attention to me, but instead raises his open hand to shade his eyes and peers out over the sea towards the little speck of an island whence all that was mortal of Masgabas long since became dust scattered by the relentless winds.

Every now and then the youth turns to an easel and dabs away at the canvas he seems to be straining eyes to work upon. For a

while I watch him, wondering what strange child of the goddess Art can be wasting his talent in this futile, fruitless manner. At last I call out to him.

"*Buona sera, signorino!* May I see what you are doing?"

"Certainly, signore, — I did not know any one else was around. I am glad to have some one to talk with." I draw near.

"It is not what I want, signore. Nothing is what I want. It seems always the wrong way. Everything seems always the wrong way!"

"That," I suggest, "is because you are young."

"You, too, are young; — no, it is not because I am young."

"Then it is because you are tired."

"But I am never tired, signore, the brain of me or the hand of me!"

"The spirit?"

"Ah, signore, yes, perhaps. It is the spirit. But why is it the spirit? I paint and I used to be satisfied. Now I paint and I am not satisfied."

"That is because you have learned that you wish to do greater things. At first you were pleased, for your work seemed to have reached your ideals. Now you have learned more, you long for more, and you just begin to realize how far beyond the old things that satisfied you the new things are to you."

"Ah," he cries, "I wish that were true, but alas it is not true, — I do not paint so well."

"Why do you wear that wreath?" I ask him.

"I do not know, signore. I thought I knew, but now I do not know." He takes it from his brow.

"And why do you let your hair grow to your shoulders?"

"I thought I knew, but I do not know." He brushes it back from his forehead.

"Why do you wear that strange flowing garb and those sandals upon your feet?"

"The Greeks wore such flowing garbs, signore, and such sandals upon their feet; — I am a Norwegian."

"Breath of the gods!" I cry at the unex-

pected announcement, "had you been Acheloo himself I should have said you were five thousand years too late! What are you doing here?"

"I have come down from the north to study painting with Herr Nordenbach, who lives in the House of Silhouettes. He painted all those dancing figures you see outlined and massed in black against the walls of his garden, which you have passed on your way here. But my heart yearns for the *fjords* and my own mountains. Oh, signore, if I could only see a tree!"

"It is homesickness," I cry.

"Ah no," he replies, "it is not homesickness, — it is not that. But I shall go back. It came all over me to-day. It is all very well for me to be a painter in my own country, but the good, patient Herr Nordenbach must know soon that I can never paint his way, down here by these perplexing rocks at night. I try and it all seems very wonderful, and I go back and I dream that I have made a picture that will make me famous. In the morning I wake up and I look at it. It is like mud.

The Herr Nordenbach may be right about the Greeks, and I have let my hair grow long and have bound it with a wreath of asphodel, but it seems silly and people laugh at me. I do not understand them and they do not understand me, and the Herr Nordenbach is too wonderful. He goes around looking like a prophet. The travelers buy his pictures, and they take photographs of him with their little picture-machines. No one takes pictures of me. He is sixty and I am twenty. I shall go back. I shall go back to-morrow."

He flings his brushes from him and casts his palette to the sands. I do not try to stop him.

"And I thought I did not care, signore, — I thought I would never care, but to-day has come a letter from her, and I understand it all now, and she will wait!"

"Ah," I say, as the light dawns, "I understand now, — you are in love!"

"That is it, signore!" he cries, "my God, how I am in love! I never knew it until to-day! I shall go back! I shall go back to-morrow!" He jumps to his feet, and before

I can stop him he has dashed his easel and his canvas against the rock. "You have guessed it, signore! I am in love!"

Silently we walk up the steep way, and together we pass the sleeping villas that border our path. Afar from the piazza come the sounds of a belated minstrel returning to the unanticipated fury of his long-suffering sposa, the flickering olive leaves laugh softly at the little comedies that creep into the lives of men, and then I turn by my gate to wish him good-night.

"*Buona sera*, Nels!" I cry — he has told me his name.

"*Buon' riposo, signore!*" he returns, taking my hand, "Thank you! I am happier now, for to-morrow I shall go back to my own country. Ah, signore, it is heart-breaking to be in love, but it is very beautiful!"

"It is very beautiful," I say. "It is very beautiful, Nels. *Buon' viaggio*, and heaven be with you!"

"And heaven be with you, too, signore!" he cries. "*Buona sera!*"

"*Buona sera!*" A little sigh creeps tremu-

lously from my breast as I turn into my dear little garden, across which gleams the light from the candle Vincenzo and Luisa have left me, a little beacon this night to my lonely storm-tossed ship.

XX

VINCENZO is greatly concerned that his padrone seems indisposed to attempt to devour every morsel of the *collazione* which Luisa has devised to crown the happenings of the joyous morning.

I try to explain that notwithstanding whatever theories Messer Darwin, Messer Spencer, or Messer Huxley may have had to the contrary, man is distinguishable above other creature-species by his ability to determine that when he has had enough he ought not to try to hold more. But Vincenzo shakes his head at my philosophy, and I see subtleties are almost useless in strengthening my contention that I have had enough.

"Though humble appetite of mine has never received greater temptation than at this very minute, Vincenzo," I cry, loud enough for the listening ears of Luisa, "nevertheless, behold! I have eaten the three very largest of the portentous fish-cakes, and even Neptune him-

self could scarcely have fared more sumptuously and contentedly; indeed I feel as though I had devoured an aquarium. Then the most terrible havoc I have made in the midst of those stewed carrots puts a blush of shame upon the complexion of my greediness, by reason of all of which I hardly deserve your reproaches, Vincenzo. Again I protest that mine is the very epitome of an appreciative appetite."

"But it is no appetite at all, signore!" Vincenzo persists, "it is an abominable nothingness of an appetite! Certainly it will break Luisa's heart as it is now breaking mine! Only try one more little fish of half a mouthful!" But I am firm.

"And after all that fine swimming and that most excellent walking up the cliff-side!" Vincenzo continues, sighing at my obstinacy, and pointing to the precious little I have left unappropriated.

Then it is I call Luisa, who comes bustling forth from her kitchen.

"Luisa," I say, "Vincenzo has become quite unmanageable again. You will have to

give him a bit of Ser Marzippi's famous advice in your most accomplished manner."

She smiles till her teeth gleam like little cubes of garlic, though at first she is perplexed, and glances from us both to the table and then to Vincenzo and me. My little jests being matters of *finesse* and preparation, I proceed to tell her that, having put everything in the house on the table, she should chide Vincenzo for urging any such outrageous extravagance as my attempting to eat it all at once.

"The guests at the wedding dinner do not eat the little sugar bride and the little sugar groom under the sugar bell held up by the sugar pillars on the sugared wedding-cake? Is n't the inside enough?"

Luisa smiles again, and I feel I am becoming convincing.

"You are as ever the very goddess Culina herself, reincarnate!" I continue, "but you have yet to learn about the wonderful mysteries hidden by the American generic *hash*,"—and I spell it for them with a purpose. "If your language-makers had been more generous to the letter H, instead of skimping it in your

dictionaries with a little half-dozen or so of words, then the indexes of your cook-books might have given friendly entertainment to our over-national delicacy, and you and Vincenzo might then have been brought up the better to understand how extremely necessary it is to help Providence out by leaving a part of to-day's feast for to-morrow's festiveness."

I sit back in my chair to survey the effect of my suggested encomium of economy, but I cannot help observing, with a shade of disappointment, that its moral has been entirely lost in the attractiveness of its material side. Vincenzo begs me to impart fuller details of "'*ash*," and Luisa is especially delighted that I am able to give so true an account of it, though I already foresee the doom I am bringing upon my head by my own thoughtlessness in having permitted the subject to advance so far.

"A little green pepper would help it, — all chopped fine!" Luisa enthusiastically exclaims with housewifely instinct, and I accede that it would be the very thing. So it seems

settled that Luisa is to try hash and all just because of the miserable notion in Vincenzo's head that my appetite is in danger of vanishing!

I permit myself to sip the glass of *vino bianca* which Vincenzo pours out with solicitude.

"It will do the signore good," he insists, "there is nothing like it when the head goes wrong from the sun. Ecco!" And he lifts the sparkling vintage to the light, leaving me in the dark as to the intent of his interpretation of my present state of being. However, when the wine is refreshing one should not question the cup-bearer. I think that bit of information I owe to Messer Giovanni della Tranquillità, and I cherish it jealously as I follow Vincenzo's advice.

"Is he not like a stupid one, signore!" Luisa exclaims, as she turns with mock fierceness on Vincenzo.

"You should be ashamed to take such liberties with our padrone, Vincenzo!" she cries, "it is that he is a poet, and when the heart is all excitement the stomach will not work.

Just wait. Later the signore will be hungry enough to eat green cauliflowers; then will the sensible Luisa send forth her worthless stick of a husband for eggs of the hen to cook into a lovely *omelet* the color of sunrise with little mushrooms in it!"

At this delicious creation of her projective imagination Luisa withdraws her untender attitude towards Vincenzo, having withered him as much as prudence permitted, and she smacks her lips with a relish of anticipation that leaves her padrone little doubt as to the course he must pursue later in the day if he would keep up her good temper.

"You are wonderful, Luisa!" I cry, and then, to pacify Vincenzo's pique, "What my Vincenzo does not think of you think of, and what you forget my good Vincenzo always remembers. Without you both it would not be possible to get along at all!"

Of course it is quite true, and Vincenzo is pacified, and hurries after Luisa to help her in the kitchen.

As I pass their door on my way to the other side of the garden I hear them gossiping

about the morning's adventures. In this involuntary eavesdropping I discover Luisa assuming the rôle of prophetess, and I blush to discover the things about me she and Vincenzo are again almost quarreling over. I try to feel annoyed, nevertheless I give way to a most wicked secret satisfaction in the details I overhear of the Baron's slender chances, according to Luisa's forecast, of ultimately entering the paradise whose wall he has been peeping over.

"And it should be plain to any head-of-wood that it ought not to be as the Don Padre Enrico would have it!" Luisa declares unreservedly. "Have not I known the signorina Francesca since she was no taller than your top-boots? I do not understand it, I tell you, I will not believe it will happen!" Vincenzo murmurs something I do not hear, and gentle Luisa throws a spoon at him. Discreetly, therefore, I withdraw from the scene of incipient battle occasioned by Luisa's faithful jealousy of anything in the way of the complete future she seems to have cast for her padrone.

I stroll down the vociferous gravel paths of my lovely garden to see what the heartless mid-day sun has been doing to my brave little flowers. Here and there I stoop to fasten to its slender stick of bamboo a wayward white pink, just such a *garofano* as Sandro wove into the hair of Simonetta,—poor Sandro! I cannot help thinking of what the Contessa's sister said to her careless Baron on our way up from the *marina* this morning. Did the wistfulness of her reproach that instant mean more than mere imagination in my conceit?

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

Then it is there comes to me like a sudden soft purposeful breeze from the warmth of the southern lands the knowledge that I am almost beginning to discover something, to discover why in Life's *mascheramento* I have so long contented myself with the sorry part of Benedick.

A funny little tingly feeling creeps over me, and as a wee wisp of a humming-bird poises

with vibrant wing, like a bit of thistle-down in the path before me, and then darts into the golden sunlight, — gone with a glitter, a gleam, — I chose to fancy Eros has been bringing me a message hidden in the quiver of those silvery wings of his, and so I take it into my wondering heart, marvelling at the little threads that weave themselves into men's destinies.

XXI

This morning I do not pass by Tessa Monceno's shop. I stop a while to look into the tiny show window. Tessa is busy with a customer. She is selling him a coral skull. The *contadino*, a great, sturdy, handsome, light-hearted fellow, pays her a whole lira for it, and comes forth as pleased as a child with a peppermint-stick. Your contadino seems to court the friendship of Messer Skull. Even the cross-bones would give it the air of maritime romance, but your son of Italy will have none of them — just the grinning skull. I suppose that is because he loves to tickle himself with fright. Old Arrigo, who is the proud possessor of the shiniest hearse in Salerno, does a driving business against his competitors, just because it was he who thought of painting a nice row of "Poor Yoricks" across the front of his *carozza di morte*. As longevity and Salerno go uncertainly hand in hand, Arrigo has amassed quite a fortune

through his up-and-doingness. As for myself, I could never be friends with a hearse owned by a man named Harry, and I hope I never shall be.

I turn from my soliloquy and am no longer Hamlet as Tessa smiles me a welcome.

"*Madonna mia! No!*" I cry, "I do not want a *cranio!*"

"But it is a very good *jettura*, signore," Tessa explains, "for keeping the cows from going dry."

"It would avail me nothing, Tessa," I declare, "I have no cow,—if I had I know it would be a kind cow and not have to be frightened into its bovine duty by the sight of a skull of coral. No, Tessa, it is a different talisman I seek to-day."

"It cannot be a butterfly," says Tessa, at a loss for the moment what to tempt me with from her tray of trinkets, "for the signore bought a butterfly the other day. But perhaps it is a butterfly? Perhaps the signore wishes to have two butterflies?"

Of course the signore has no use for two butterflies, so Tessa has to try again.

"What is that, Tessa?" he asks.

"Oh, that," replies Tessa, "is a very lovely *fascino*, signore. So cheap! Just like a baby rose, and pink and lovely. It is only ten lire."

"What!" I cry. "Why, Tessa, I would not have a lira left in the world. It costs too much, I cannot think of it!" I hand it back.

Tessa does not insist, for it is only the rapacious foreigner who forces a bargain, and I have long since found that when an Italian shopkeeper knows you know him he will be fair from the beginning; — warnings to the contrary ought to be stricken from every traveler's scarlet *vade mecum*. So I do not try to beat down the price Tessa asks me. It is a fair price, and a beautiful bit; — indeed, I wonder that Tessa can sell it so cheaply, but I am not yet fully broken into realizing the full extent of the extravagances my Uncle Rufus's last will and testament have enabled me to indulge in. Ten lire seems too much for my whim, and yet —

"What else have you there, Tessa?"

"Nothing so lovely as the rose, signore. Here is a crocodile. Five lire!"

I hurriedly hand it back.

"What can any one want of a horrible crocodile, Tessa?"

"Oh, but signore," Tessa cries, in defense of her wares, "with one of these the signore could never die from wound of stiletto!"

"*Ferita di stiletto* will never trouble me, Teresina. It is legendary."

Tessa shrugs her shoulders as though she were not so sure, and sighs a little sigh, but I pay no attention to it.

"The signore will not have the nice little *cranio* against the cows, nor the nice little crocodile against the stiletto, nor another little *farfalla* to keep peace at home, nor the lovely little rose for only ten lire to make the one you love love you always, so what have I else to show the signore? He will have nothing!" Clearly there is a note of disappointment in Tessa's voice. Now I hate to disappoint any one, so I ask to take another look at the rose. Tessa becomes hopeful.

"And it is very good, a very good charm for other things too, signore," she says.

"Such as what, Tessa?"

"Such as — such as very good friends."

"But I always have good friends, Tessa, and my friends always stay good. I have the kindest friends in the world."

"It is good for digestion also," Tessa adds.

"But my digestion is wonderful, Tessa; you should have seen me night before last!"

"Then," cries Tessa, as a final effort to discover my Achillean spot, "it brings luck to new house-owners, and makes the sun smile upon the garden, and the rain to come when the vines are dry, and the sea to be kind, and the sorrowful to be happy, and the hungry to be fed!"

"Stop, Tessa! I must have it instantly." I put down my ten lire and they become hers. She is very happy indeed.

"You must not hide it," she exclaims, "you must wear it, — out, — so!" and Tessa fastens it to my watch-chain.

"Ah, signore!" she cries, "it is perfect!"

"I shall wear it, Tessa," I explain, "because it makes the sorrowful happy, the hungry to be fed, the sea to be kind, the thirsty vines

to be watered, and the sun to shine upon our gardens."

"I hope she will see it!" Tessa exclaims irrelevantly. I do not ask her what she means, for she has no business to mean anything. It is I who am buying the charm. Tessa may tell me what it is good for, but what I buy it for is my own affair, so I become a trifle haughty and wish her good-morrow.

She waves her hand to me as I go on my way, and there is a wickedly mischievous little gleam in her teasing eyes. Before I have gone far I can hear her singing one of those foolish little *stornelli* some Neapolitan has probably taught her.

Rosa scarlata —
Come 'na farfalletta so venuto
da te, Rosa gentile, e t' ho baciata!

But I, I am thinking of the jasmine flower.

Fior gelsomino!
Perche voi siete tanto disumana,
con me che non son sciocco, ne cretino?

And I hurry on to the Piazza, where a little group of idlers, loitering by the old stone wall

looking out towards Ischia, lazily watches the *vaporetto* plow its last knot through the yielding waves, leaving a streak of churning foam in its wake, the color of the sea-birds that dip into its swirling eddies.

I watch the little boat, which soon will be landing a swarm of tiny black specks there on the wharf of the *marina*, a thousand feet below us and a mile away. It seems a thousand years ago that I was down there, a little black speck myself, and I smile to think of it, so deeply does the plant of one's new life root itself in the fresh soil of a happy land.

XXII

We do not have to wait long before the rumble of the *funicolare* is followed by the funny little car that has crawled up its gleaming path of track, and, like a willing beast of burden, gives up its bevy of passengers, who step forth under the auspices of the high-chested officials that make the occurrence almost a function. Between times they are quite human, and mingle with their fellow-citizens like good gossips, but with each "Avanti!" down below (following such a matter of importance as the landing of the boat from Naples), Giuseppe, and Giovanni, and Giorgio draw themselves aloof, straighten their caps to a commonplace angle, and instantly rise above their surroundings, as their comrades, used to it all, respectfully give place to the resumption of interrupted authority, — themselves sighing, perhaps, that it has not been their own good fortune to be counted among the chosen few who may

flourish a bit of gold braid and call out "*La piazza, signori!*" and, as a final exhibition of tolerance, "*Pronto!*" when the passengers tumble out, all looking just a little bit foolish to find themselves on parade, without notice, before almost the island's entire population.

Here I observe the austere type of lady journeying south from Rome — you can tell her by the huge brooch of marble mosaic she wears clasped at her throat. Then I behold her counterpart, journeying north from Palermo — you can tell her by the Sicilian scarfs; and after her comes the inevitable damsel who has an international aptitude for journeying from anywhere, and that you can tell because her skirt is four inches higher in front than it is behind.

I find myself giving *place aux dames*, because men tourists hardly ever seem to strike one as being anything but just busy paying bills and wearing unbecoming caps.

To-day's arrivals are only a handful, and so the disappointed Neapolitans, who live over here just to grow rich housing and feeding transient *viaggiatori*, shout, and push, and

coax, and wheedle, until there is hardly a shred of themselves or their victims left to drag back to the seductive discomforts they alluringly set forth at twenty lire a day.

In vain I look for the Baron, — not that I have any business to be looking for him, or that any one has told me he would be returning, or even that I have any desire to see him again as long as I live, — but I think I have half expected to discover him bustling out of the carriage, to elbow his way back into the little circle that has drawn its hospitable circumference around my heart.

As the last one steps out of the carriage I begin to believe in the efficacy of my coral rose. Indeed I unclasp it, and take another good look at its *incanto* self, and as I restore it to the place Tessa Monceno has insisted it should go, I hear a footstep behind, and turn to find Don Enrico beside me.

"*Buon giorno, signor amico!*" he cries, "and a day it is after the blessed San Costanzo's own ordering! The heavens are blue, Æolus breathes from the south, the *scirocco* is off to the mainland, old Corrado saw a quail

in Salvatore Massa's vineyard this morning, before ever the dew had rolled itself up into little crystal pills for Messer Sun to swallow, and so I am on my way to visit my little farm by the Veruotto. If you have the courage of Icaro, signore, I should feel it an honor to have you come with me. It might entertain you, and the walk will be shaded by the walls of the *strada* until we are nearly there."

Now nothing could please me better than to be with Francesca's blessed uncle this perfect morning, and, having no wings, I need not fear the fate of Icarus, for the sun and I are brothers, so we climb down the old steps below the saracenic-domed village *orologio* and leave the chattering crowd behind.

"I shall pay you a state call, to-morrow, signore," Don Enrico announces, after the custom of the land, "if I may hope to be so fortunate as to find you at home. It is a happy thing to have a good neighbor, and I want to see what you are doing to Villa Giacinto. You see we Caprese are curious — the most curious on earth!"

"I shall be home always, Don Enrico. I

shall not stir out of my garden until you come!" I declare.

"Then may it be in the morning at eleven?"

"I shall indeed be honored, Don Enrico! *Ad ogni ucello suo nido è bello*, — to every bird his nest is beautiful, — and I hope you will find mine so."

"I know so, Signor Allen, for I knew it when the marchessa was living, — poor lady!"

"Was she so very unhappy, then?" I ask.

"Very unhappy," Don Enrico replies.

"Is it true that she died of broken heart, Don Enrico?"

"One never knows, signore; so many live with a broken heart. No, I think it was the fever, but the poor lady was very unhappy."

Even though it takes from romance to invest the poor lady with fever when I had felt sure it would be broken heart, there is a quaint simplicity in Don Enrico's literalness that one finds characteristic of his people.

"I wish the Contessa and the signorina Francesca could be with us this beautiful morning," I say, not meaning to turn the conversation abruptly, but we have left the

poor marchessa a dozen paces behind without a further word.

"Poor little Francesca!" Don Enrico cries, hardly realizing that he is not saying it to himself. My heart almost stops beating.

"What can have happened?" I ask myself, and then I say aloud: "I hope Signorina Francesca is not ill, Don Enrico?" He bursts into a merry laugh.

"No, signore! My little niece is not ill, she was never so well. She is like a morning rose for health, but oh, signore, she is obstinate, — a pretty will of her own!"

I am relieved, but it is not fair to ask questions, so I leave Don Enrico to go on. Presently he explains.

"You see, signore, it is this way. In our country our girls marry young. It is the duty, then, for their guardians to pick out good husbands for them, because they are so inexperienced it does not do to let them do it themselves, as I am told they do in your country — but your girls marry later, I understand. *Va bene*, then. Now the father of our little Francesca died when she was very

young, and so it is I who must look out for her, — *va bene!* She is an angel, but she has a will of her own! Now my niece never bothered worrying about a husband. There are few young men of family, signore, on our island, and any other match was not to be thought of. *Va bene!* Along comes the barone from Germany, well born, a fine fortune, and he liked Francesca very much. I received assurances through my correspondents of his position, indeed I made the most careful inquiries, and then what was more natural than that I should propose the alliance; there have been some very happy marriages between *tedeschi* and our own race, signore. It is true the Contessa was not so sure, but she is very wise, and after all it was Francesca who should have decided."

I listen and my heart thumps so loudly I blush for fear Don Enrico will hear it.

"And then," he goes on, "I had even come to believe Francesca would be very fond of the signore barone — oh, he plays *such* a cribbage! — but no, she has a sweet will of her own, and I never know what she will do next."

I cough to hide my excitement, and listen breathlessly.

"It began the day you brought our *bambino* back from your garden. Francesca tells me that she does not think it looks nice for any one fat like the signore barone to have so slender a wife! We are amazed, for it is too absurd. Then Francesca comes home from Mrs. Delmar's and tells me the signore barone gets very red in the face when he climbs down stairs. What ridiculousness! Again I reprove her. And when we return from the *marina* this morning, she bursts into tears, and vows she will not marry the signore barone. '*Calma, calma!*' I cry, but it makes not one orange-seed's worth of difference! Then I become very angry, but Francesca is obstinate. All the time she kneels herself by little Giacinto, and he too starts to cry with all the lungs the blessed saints have given him. Blessed Heaven, what a noise! Her sister tries to reason with her, and I stand like a stone of mortification that my niece should behave so, because, signore, the barone is standing by all the time, white and perplexed.

"'Francesca,' he cried, 'do you not love me?'

"'I never loved you!' the wicked child replied. 'I have never pretended I did. It was to please my uncle; but I cannot, no, I cannot!'

"'I have guessed so,' the barone said, 'but I was not sure. Now I am sure. It is better to be sure. It is one terrible mistake, but we have found out in time. I understand it, my good friend,' he adds, turning to me, 'I understand it,—I have been through it many times. Now I shall be resigned. It is made that I die an old bachelor! So I will go away to-day, and that will make everything to be simple again!' and as he turned, Francesca jumped to her feet and kissed him good-bye on the cheek for being so good! You see, signore, Heaven itself can do nothing with her unless she has her own way! And so the poor signore barone has gone, and I do not think he will come back,"—he sighs a little sigh of regret,—"but what am I to do with her! A minute after he was gone she burst out singing. No, signore, it was not madness, but gladness;—

I do not pretend to understand. And then she pretended the headache, and all the time we were with Miss Winterspoon my willful Francesca and Giacinto were romping around our garden, singing like happy quails freed from the nets of the snarers, and I hope Heaven has been kind not to let any one but my sister hear them. Oh, the poor signor barone! But what is one to do?"

"*Niente!*" I cry, "Nothing!" And then I sing it in my heart and soul until they almost burst with the rush of the joy that comes upon me. I leap down the steps like a chamois and throw my cap into the air. Don Enrico looks at me amazed. I come to my senses and realize the extraordinary thing I am doing. Then I leap back again to his side and tell him the truth — I cannot help it, and I thank Heaven it is so.

XXIII

I SING to myself all the way home; I have to be careful not to sing to every one I meet on the way; — it is barely escaping being picked out as a *lunatico*, and I know I shall burst with happiness if my heart keeps leaping and bounding as it does now. And yet Don Enrico merely told me I looked respectable!

"It is quite an honorable surprise, signore," said he, "you will admit that I am not just prepared. I had planned nothing but the signore barone, and so you see I must think."

"Oh, think it just as I want it!" I cried, like a little child who wants to go to play and is n't sure he can, "think now!"

Don Enrico took my hand. "My son," cried he, "may heaven bring happiness to us all!" and then we parted.

I tremble lest I devastate my garden when I reach home — I long to take Luisa's funny shears and cut every lovely rose and rush with my arms full of exquisite flowers to

Francesca and fling them into her arms. I pass the shop of Luigi Miccio, and wonder, as I do, how Francesca would like the lovely white silk scarf in the window — I never noticed it before. Then I stare in at Giuseppe Canfora's window and wonder if he has shoes three sizes smaller than the Russian ones I see there, smartly adorned with silver clasps.

Then, before I know it, I find myself at Pietro Vanni's. He insists that never has mortal shown more perfect taste than I am showing this very instant — I am buying a tiny *bonbonnière*, a girdle that Miliano Targhetta might well have been proud to claim as his masterpiece, a bracelet that Michelangelo might have given Vittoria Colonna, had his hand dared as much as his heart, and a chain that might have hung around the neck of *la bella Simonetta*, only Heaven has held it for a lovelier throat.

I know Pietro is not so interested in my perfect taste as he is in my propensity to remember that things bought are to be paid for, so I produce the proof of his perspicacity, and in exchange receive the precious parcels.

"Buona notte, signore!" Pietro cries,— "Buona riuscita!" His face is one homily on the art of smiling.

Then it is I realize that he must guess I have not purchased these things for Luisa, and I try to persuade myself that he will imagine I am sending them to convenient aunts in America! Alas! I know better! — Alfredo Carmine, *maestro delle poste*, knows every package that leaves the island, and Pietro will find out, for it is enough to have seen it in his eyes without his having wished me good fortune — *buona riuscita!*

Well, who cares? I don't! I run along, and only stop for a whiff of the perfume of orange-blossoms that comes across my path. I stop to peek through the gate of an old wall that surrounds a little grove where the trees are white with creamy buds, and I close my eyes while I breathe the fragrance borne to me by the soft winds of the noon-time.

As I open them again a laughing face looks into mine, — I stammer, my knees shake, I forget to put my cap back on my head, I drop the parcels clumsily, and am terrified lest their

precious burdens roll out of the flimsy wrappers, and I blush until I look like the western sky at sunset.

"How do you do?" I say, but the words sound commonplace and to my rage seem to trickle from my tongue like ice-water. Oh, ye heavenly gods! I am acting like an idiot, and there she stands, — Francesca! — alone!

"*Buon giorno*, Signor Allen."

How the words glide over her sweet lips! Oh miserable, happy me! And yet I can only blurt forth an apology for peering like a monkey into some one else's garden, when I should be on my way to my own.

She laughs — now I know what the music of the angels of heaven is like! — and she tells me I am not a monkey. I love her for discovering that; — Heaven knows I feel utterly ridiculous, and I know I look just as I feel. I have no business to stand talking a minute, — it would shock every one who ever pretended to good Caprese manners to think of such an outrageous thing. There is not a contessa sister nor an uncle in sight, — I have had fully three minutes to salute Francesca, to

beg her pardon for my intrusion, to tip my cap, and to hurry on my way, so she can open the gate and hurry on hers with all the propriety Donna Etichetta has prescribed for the social ailments of the best families of Italy, and yet here I stand doing nothing!

Just because she does n't seem to mind — that has nothing to do with my side of the matter. I am crimson with the very shame of my bad manners — she only laughs again.

"My sister tells me you will come to Giacinto's *festa*, signore," she cries, "and that will be very nice, — *very* nice!" she drawls out the "very nice" in the most lovable, adorable way, and, for a moment, everything blurs before me; then with a thud I am sensible again.

"It was dear of the Contessa to wish me to come, and I look forward to it with such happiness — you cannot guess how happy I shall be!"

"Ah, but perhaps yes, I can!" she says, with a world of mischief in those beloved eyes, "for we shall have a wonderful pigeon pie, my uncle himself is to make it!" As though

my happiness were to be found under a crust!

Oh, wicked little Francesca, why do you tease me! Last night as I tossed on my pillow I thought out a wonderful dialogue, — just what I would say to you, if Aphrodite were kind enough to let the Fates bring us together, alone, for one happy moment, and then, just what you would say to me! Now the words are flown with the speed of the iynx to its nest, and I can only cry in my heart, "I love you! I love you! I love you!" while my lips mock me with other words!

"I have just left your uncle, signorina," I hear myself saying; "he honored me with an invitation to walk with him to the Veruotto, and I have spent a delightful morning."

"*Si?* For that I am happy, Signor Allen!"

"The happiest morning I have ever spent, signorina, — now!"

She looks down at her little feet and drops a rose from her armful. I stoop to pick it up, and she stoops to anticipate me, but I am too quick for her, and I whisk it through the trellis of the gate before she can reach it.

We both laugh, and I tuck it under my coat. If I have expected her to beg for it coquettishly I am mistaken. Instead her great beautiful eyes become grave, she looks very startled, — I had not guessed she could look so serious as that, and then, with her hand upon the latch she looks squarely into my waiting eyes and says slowly, —

"You are a bold robber, signore."

"Your uncle will tell you I am a faithful robber! It is horribly rude for me to have forced you to stand here listening to me! May Heaven give me the right to do it another time! Forgive me!" And I lift my cap and rush away lest I utterly smash the tiny vestige of island etiquette I have left unpulverized.

I do not dare to turn — she would not be looking back if I did, and as I hurry along I ask myself: "Will her uncle tell her to-day? Or will he wait to tell her to-morrow? Or will he never tell her?" How the gods torment me! I reach for my little coral rose, oh unhappy me! It is gone! I have lost it! Instinctively I turn, and plod back through the

dusty path, — not a trace of it can I find! I go back to the little gate; it is not there. Alas! there is no use in searching; — my tiny treasure is like a poppy-seed in a desert — I shall not find it! And then I remember the rose I have placed next to my wildly beating heart — perhaps the gods have given it to me as a sign from heaven after all, so I press its petals to my lips, and reflect, "What is a dead piece of coral to a living rose?" And I run on until I am safe in the seclusion of my own little garden, where there is not a rose so lovely as the one I hold in my trembling hand. I bend over the basin of the fountain, and I start as I see my reflection there, for it is as though it were of some one I have never seen before — of all that is good in me, the dead things in my soul forever gone, — my own true self at last! Did she see that when she looked into my eyes? Then a faint breeze ripples the waters of the little pool and I turn away, but something in my heart tells me she did see that, and I burst out singing again, and I feel that I could have challenged Orpheus!

XXIV

"È cosa che mai se è udito, signore!" cries Vincenzo, when he catches sight of me, feeding the greedy little goldfish this morning. "It is an unheard of thing, signore, to stuff the little fish so much — they will burst!"

I am not sure but that Vincenzo is right, so I take his advice, and leave a lot of disappointed little shimmering, darting specks of gold to settle their threatened digestions as best they may by exercising the monotonous privileges Fate has given them.

Vincenzo takes great pride in our goldfish, for no one else has them, and Luisa is in mortal terror lest they become lonesome and die of broken heart. She is thinking of a land-bird Vincenzo once brought her from Naples, and its sad history, which always brings tears to her eyes, but I try to explain that goldfish are truly nomads, if one has the price to pay for their migrations.

But if we are proud of the goldfish we are prouder of our fountain; there is not another on the island. That is because we had the foresight to build an enormous reservoir in which the chance rains might be gathered. Luisa is always saying a little prayer against its bursting, for she has seen a frightening print of the great Deluge somewhere, and, I imagine, has got it into her head that we could all be swept away by a rush of waters unknown since Messer Noah's time. Once it sprung a tiny leak and Luisa rushed to the house-top, but Vincenzo soon mended the damage, and then ordered the panic-stricken Luisa down from her vantage as sternly as ever Messer Bluebeard gave command to Fatima. I pointed out to Vincenzo that Luisa should not have been scolded, and rebuked him severely.

"That, signore," he replied, "is because my padrone has never known the happiness of being a married man. You must never let a woman have her own way about any notion that comes into her head; if you do you are lost. *Ecco!* I have to scold Luisa,—it keeps

us very happy, — the signore knows we are most happy, — it is perfect!"

It is perfect, and as I would do nothing in the world to upset the equilibrium of that which makes such perfect happiness, and such happy perfectness, I ceased my scolding and left Time and Vincenzo to comfort Luisa.

How the hours drag! I have been up since dawn. I have tried to write, have been furious with myself to find that I had a ravenous appetite for breakfast, which is rather humiliating to discover when one is in love, especially when one has imagined himself a poet. No, I am not a poet; I decide I cannot be a poet. I try to write a sonnet to Francesca, but it sounds absurd. I try another upon her beautiful eyes, but I tear it up in a fury; — not one word in the whole world is good enough to mingle with the poesy of her fair name, so I leave it to Heaven, and listen as the gods breathe sweet words to my ears which no one else can hear.

I pace up and down the walks of my garden, and gather bouquets for every room

in my *casa*. Never before have the flowers seemed so lovely, and I marvel at their multitude.

Then I sit down under the cooling shade of the vine-clad pergola and look out over the mass of color more beautiful than the mosaics of San Marco. I close my eyes, and rest my head upon my hands, and as I sit, wrapped in the thought that weaves itself into the very fibre of my being, I seem to see her standing there by the tall-growing roses, which she reaches up to gather, as a goddess reaches for the roses of Igdrasyl. And I seem to see her stoop to kiss a little child toddling along by her side. He stretches up his baby arms. An older boy comes bounding into the garden and drags him away for a romp. She turns to me, smiling, and holds forth her arm, — and then it all vanishes.

A little shuffling sound startles me out of my vision.

"A thousand pardons!" I cry, jumping to my feet, to find Don Enrico standing before me, a smile upon his dear old face. "I have been waiting your coming impatiently, and

Time seemed to delight in dragging the hour, — yet here you find me dreaming!"

"There could not be a fairer spot on earth for beautiful dreams, my son!" Don Enrico answers, taking my hand. Then it is that I see it all written in his eyes. My heart bounds with joy, my eyes flood with tears of happiness. I fling my arms around him and dance him around the path as though we were whirling dervishes, and when I stop for breath, I see Vincenzo and Luisa peering forth with blanched faces, uncertain what they ought to do, for of course they think I have gone stark mad.

Don Enrico takes me by the arm and quotes Solomon, Dante, St. Basil, and Theocritus in extenuation of my happiness, as though there needed to be any.

"For I did not dream, my son," he tells me, "that our little Francesca has been falling in love too, and that is just what she has been doing. It was very wicked of her, before she sent the poor barone away, and I must scold her for that, because Heaven is displeased when one of its children forgets a

duty. She shall take a lamp of silver to hang before the shrine of Our Lady by the rock near San Antonio, and then I shall not scold her again!"

We are by the little alcove of ilex-trees, where a lovely pedestal holds a little statue of Eros. I drop on my knees and I ask Uncle Enrico's blessing. Vincenzo and Luisa drop on their knees, too, and I see them crossing themselves, for they think something strange must be happening to me. Faithful children of this happy isle! No longer can they bear the suspense, so they rush over to me, and with tears in their eyes ask with choking, frightened voices, —

"Oh padrone, kindest-of-all, tell your poor Vincenzo and your poor Luisa! We break in the heart!"

And I tell them!

XXV

One would never have guessed the inherent qualities of mastery that have lurked in the fathoms of Luisa's temperament, which is to say that good Vincenzo has betaken himself with his philosophy for a stroll, ostensibly to the Castello, but in reality, I fancy, with the desire to withdraw, unmolested, for reflection upon the ways of woman.

Indeed, Luisa's unbounded delight at the import of the confidence to them in the garden this morning has taken soaring wing to height of eagle's flight in the impressive vindication she has just delivered to Vincenzo of her claim to the gift of discovering charms that influence the vagarious *gite* of Messer Cupid.

"The signore himself will find it!" she cries. "It is there tucked in the folds of the canopy over his *letto*, — just one little husk of the *aglio* and a sprig of the *fiore azzur'* from the blessed shrine of La Vergine delle Rocce. I hid it there a week ago in spite of Vincenzo!"

"Did I not declare it?" she cried, turning triumphantly to him after I had told her. "Who now knows something, eh? Who now must keep still and be told her most excellent wisdom is but foolish silliness, all because she has a husband more doubting than the good San Tomaso the Don Padre preached about last Sunday!"

In consequence of the moral support happy events have given Luisa's argument, Vincenzo's superiority — as displayed in the kitchen but a day since — has, for the moment, taken mercurial descent. I doubt not that his views on the subjugation of woman to her proper sphere (as defined by man) will come in for a temporary readjustment. Naturally there came to him the temptation to curb Luisa's enthusiasm over himself, but I think he saw that the excitements of the occasion carry some excuses, so he lets Luisa off gently, and the twinkling eye of his padrone tried to convey to him the Italian equivalent of Robert Louis Stevenson's immortal advice: "Be soople, Davie, in things immaterial."

While I am delighted to find that Luisa

does not exhibit the slightest particle of jealousy, but, instead, is all joyfulness that when the orange trees shall have blossomed again she will have a dear *padrona* to plan housekeeping for, there is yet lingering about her industrious bustling, this afternoon, the little half-regret which one always might guess lay in the sighing of queen-mothers at coronations. Still, I comfort Luisa, she is to remain *regina-cucinaria*, for I have come to learn much of the ways of Caprese households.

I can see that Luisa is taking a mental survey of the premises.

"Thank the good San Niccolo," she says, "the house is large enough. And the blessed San Francesco could spend a whole day in our beautiful garden with his little sermons, and then not get around to half of the flowers!" Then she adds reflectively, "There will be plenty of room for them to play there when the time comes."

"The saints?" I ask her innocently.

"Of course not!" she cries, laughing at my ignorance, "who could I be meaning but the blessed *bambini* my kindest padrone and my

lovely, new after-while-padrona will have, to make this into a *paradiso vero* for their Luisa and their Vincenzo to be so proud of!" And I have to blush at the stupidity of my not having looked more particularly into those matters that appertain to the patronage of such saintly ones as the most benign Bishop of Myra.

"Yes," Luisa goes on to instruct me, "it is the good San Niccolo who very especially takes care of the *bambini*. He is very good to good little ones on his *festa* eve, but let wicked, naughty *ragazzi* look out for the sharp little switches of the poplar he knows well how to handle, too!" At which words I catch her with a fleeting, guilty look of reminiscence, which, however, she banishes with the observation, "Still they do not always mean it, and San Niccolo is sometimes a bit too hard on them."

"Well, Luisa," I say, "I hope San Niccolo will be kind to us, and not too busy to visit our little garden. Perhaps sometimes he will feel lonesome, and then he will come as you say."

"Yes, and we must always leave a little lighted candle for him in the church under the hill of San Michele." Then she cries, "Oh, it is very wonderful, signore, how he gets about, and there never was a better saint! Don Martino said so, and Don Onofrio said that the first day San Niccolo was born the good saint stood right up in the little tub which his blessed grandmother was bathing him in, and that he crossed his hands to show that he was giving thanks to the dear God for having brought him into the world. Then Don Onofrio said also that no sooner did San Niccolo know what it was to feed than he knew what it was to fast. Don Onofrio read it in a book. Do you believe it, signore?"

Though I am startled at Luisa's unexpected question I answer, "I do believe it, Luisa!" and I find I have no doubt about it; mine, like the good Blougram's, must be, — "Whole faith or none!"

Quite convinced, Luisa expresses great satisfaction. "And you must bring them up to be very pious, signore; perhaps, if there are very many, one of them will grow up to be

a cardinal. Oh, I hope there will be very many!"

Somehow I find the idea rather entertaining. I have never met the father of a cardinal, and I am wondering what unique privileges the distinction would carry with it. Therefore I consult Luisa on the subject. Alas, she can give me no dependable information, although she ventures to suggest that the fathers of cardinals are a class of saints all to themselves. A very proper and commendable projection upon Luisa's part, to which I lend the devout encouragement of hoping it is so.

"It will be a very long time, perhaps, Luisa," I say, thinking of my beatification.

"Oh, not at all, signore!" cries Luisa, thinking of nothing of the sort. "Why, only yesterday the little Conte Giacinto was nothing at all but a sweet breath upon the lips of the angels of heaven, and, *ecco!* now he is the signore's *camerata*. Don't you see, signore, these little years will be flying by like the swift-winged *aghirone!*" What a chase we are both giving Messer Time, and I laugh at the merry thought of it.

"You may laugh, signore!" Luisa cries, "but it is true!"

"Of course it is true!" I joyfully admit, "and that is just why I am laughing. To find the pleasant truth, — that ought to make one very happy, and to hear it from the lips of so excellent a sibyl — well, Luisa, you shall have a new gown for the *festa* of San Gennaro in the autumn, and Vincenzo shall have a new *giacchetto!*"

While Luisa does not understand a word about sibyls, there can be no doubt as to her clear perception of the reference to a new gown, while I am glad to see she will not begrudge Vincenzo the jacket.

"The signore is always too good!" she cries, with tears of delight in her great brown eyes, "and oh, what a fine wedding there will be!"

It is plain to see that Luisa cannot, even yet, recover sufficiently to descend from the spiritual to the material. Even the promise of the gown has not led her away from her excitement over the morning's happenings.

I light my cigarette and finish my coffee and step forth to meet Vincenzo, who has just re-

turned, a parcel of mail in his hand, for which he has stopped at the post-office on his way back. His face betrays a smile of contentment — all the clouds have vanished.

"I saw her, signore!" he confides, "there in San Michele's little church. She was kneeling to say a little prayer before Our Lady of the Roses." We walk to the terrace silently. As we approach we hear Luisa singing the *voltata* of—

"*Tu nce si' nnata co le rose mmano,*"

but with a *timbre* that always reminds me of Azucena. At the sound Vincenzo pauses. Then a look of resolution passes to his handsome eyes and he says, —

"I do not know, signore mio, what has got into that head of Luisa's to-day! She is all set up, just because what she said about the signore baron has come true. Of course it has come true. I knew it would come true, but any one could see that, only I did not say so; that would have been to humor her, and have I not already told my signore that a woman must never be allowed to have her own way about the notions that come into her head?"

I refrain from comment, for I have learned that mixing up in the management of Vincenzo's inmost affairs is futile, and I am not surprised, when he enters, to hear the singing interrupted. However, as it begins again, this time with Vincenzo's lovely rich voice blending with the harmonious melody in a way that would convert even Miss Winterspoon from her musical heresy, could she but hear it now, I smile to myself, and turn to reflect upon the ways of men.

XXVI

We are all sitting around Mrs. Delmar's little tea-table, with the rippling sea fifteen hundred feet below us. One cannot help wondering what old Tai-tsou would have said had ever he dreamed that the Celestial Kingdom would come to be lending comfort to the children of the Cæsars in this eyrie nook.

"You know, Mr. Allen, I think he would have deserted the *pays de porcelaine* for our island, if ever he could have dreamed of anything so lovely as it is to-day. Look at our beloved Monte Solaro — could anything be more perfectly like a wonderfully carved lump of exquisite jade? What Chinaman could resist it!"

"Or what Mandarin, Mrs. Delmar, ever grew such marvelous fruit!" I answer, laughing, for there, caught in the emerald-leaved branches of the tree in the courtyard, gleams a great yellow ball like a pear, at which

a little bird has just picked futilely, to fly away astonished.

"Oh dear!" she cries, laughing as she looks over the parapet, "it is my lovely golden thread! How could it have gotten down there!"

"There is magic in everything you touch!" I declare, taking up a wonderful silken scarf which she has been embroidering.

"It is for your Francesca, Signor Pirato! You see I must call you that, for you swooped down on us and have stolen the heart of our little girl."

"But that is n't fair, is it, Uncle Enrico? Did n't it belong to me? Can a man steal his own?"

Uncle Enrico laughs, and shakes his head.

"The ways of youth are beyond the ken of man — even Solomon stopped before he got that far! But you have descended upon us, my son, in half the time ever the Barbarossa would have taken to clamber up these steep hillsides! And your eyes look straight into our eyes, and we can deny you nothing!"

"Oh, it is too lovely for anything!" cries

Miss Winterspoon, who until now has been nibbling in her daintiest manner at a tiny wafer of vanilla, while her eyes devour the toast that has not yet reached us. "You know, Mrs. Delmar, it is positively an idyl—how you blush, Mr. Allen!—and you are so young; is n't it quite too lovely — and romantic!" She sighs like the breath of morning winds passing through the leaves of the pomegranate, and into her eyes there creeps the memoried expression of something Time himself may almost have forgotten. Then she jumps up and kisses Francesca impulsively. "Oh, you will be so happy!" she cries.

"Ah, Signorina Winterspoon, I am happy!" Francesca answers, giving my hand a little squeeze and looking into my eyes with her joyful happy own, "I did not know there was anything in the whole world that could mean such happiness," she says, simply.

"There would not be, dear child, if the prince or the princess were another!"

Ah, Miss Winterspoon! How little has the world guessed what sorrows your heart has throbbed out, alone and uncomforted,

under that funny little mantilla that makes you look like a hickory-nut doll!

I turn toward her gratefully, and my heart glows with joyous pride as I see my beloved Francesca take one of the crimson roses from her silver girdle to hand to her. Miss Winterspoon buries her poor, peaked, funny face in its fragrance, and, as she does, a tear drops upon a petal, glistens, and is gone.

Only Francesca and I see it.

Then little Giacinto slides over to her side, for he loves her. She has taught him to call her "Auntie Winterspoon," and although they are very hard words for his little Latin lips to lisp, I think it makes her very happy. He reaches for the chain around his neck to show her the little coral butterfly, and then, as though a sudden memory of unexpected things had come to him, he drops it and looks questioningly at his Contessa Mamma, who remembers, too, what happened, that day on the landing, when the music stopped and the lamentations began, and to just what an extent little coral butterflies will protect

little runaway boys when they have been gone an especially long time! Anyway Giacinto seems to put faith in the butterfly, for he returns to it and trots over to show me what a faithful custodian he has been. I give him a kiss, and the little bundle of chocolates that I have had tucked away in my pocket. Then it is that his politeness is put to a test, for his Contessa Mamma gives him a little sign, and he generously offers one of his sweets to each of us. Of course we decline, to his immense relief, except Miss Winterspoon, who declares: —

"He is quite too dear and quaint for anything! I could n't refuse anything from his darling chubby little hands!" On what thin ice has she glided!

Suddenly the afternoon bells begin their vigorous chiming, as though the gods were reaching down from Parnassus to make music for the well-beloved among mortals, and Miss Winterspoon jumps to her feet to tell us it is shocking late and she must be on her way to pay a visit of state to a Crown Princess who spends two months of every year on the other

side of the mountain, and saves two months of her royal income for winter uses by doing it.

"I would not dream of going, you know," she confesses, "only my Aunt Alexandra would never forgive me if I did n't, Mrs. Delmar, — and one has to keep up all sorts of things for the family, Don Enrico!"

Then I escort her down to the garden gate, for I have learned that the agile lady's descents are precarious if unattended. As she bids me good-bye she whispers:—

"They *never* would have been happy, Mr. Allen, never! It is quite too dreadful to say it, but I cannot tell you what a load it is off my mind to think it is to be you and *not* the Baron! Really, though I have never told it to any one, I was quite upset the day we all met on the cliff path, for, incredible as it would seem of any gentleman, and especially when we were in the midst of Schopenhauer, the Baron actually tweeked my arm!"

Of course I am shocked at the Baron's outrageous conduct, but I tell Miss Winterspoon men lose their heads sometimes, and

with a giddy little protest she cries good-bye as I wave her *addio*.

"Did you ever lose anything, *mio caro?*" Francesca asks me when I am by her side again.

"My heart, *carina!*" I cry.

"Nothing more?" — the little mischievous look comes into her eyes again, but I pretend to be very solemn.

"Only my temper, sweetheart, when I found Vincenzo had nearly forgotten to take you the roses this morning."

"Oh, but he did n't forget, *caro mio*, and it was wicked of you to be impatient! Wait till Uncle Enrico invents penances for you!" — she is thinking of the lamp to Our Lady near the rock of San Antonio. "Did n't you lose something else?" For a moment a little shade of disappointment creeps into her face, for I keep shaking my head. Then I cry:—

"Something pink, *carina?*"

"*Un' fiore?*" her eyes are full of mischief again.

"A rose?"

"All beautiful coral on a little chain?"

"But no," I cry, myself disappointed this time, "it was not on a little chain."

"But it is on a little chain now, *caro mio!*" she cries, and Francesca pulls a little chain from her neck, where, nestling there, I behold the coral rose I had lost.

"You bold robber!" I cry, as I take her in my arms and smother her with kisses.

"*Una fidele!*" she laughs, when I let her free, and then, with a funny little pucker on her lips, "*Cattivo!*" she cries, "*ecco!* See how you have shocked Uncle Enrico and my sister!"

Now, though Uncle Enrico tells us we have utterly smashed the last fragment of Caprese etiquette to bits, the Contessa gives Francesca a little kiss, and Mrs. Delmar, with a merry laugh, calls us her blessed children, and comforts Uncle Enrico's perplexity with sweet philosophy.

"You and I must not forget, Don Enrico," she says, "that the wiser one grows the more he learns!"

"And then," cries the Contessa, "he learns that he has not learned anything at all!" and she playfully pinches Francesca's cheek.

"Ah, that is true, my children," Don Enrico admits, giving me a little pat of forgiveness, "and I have seen full seventy years; — there is no true knowledge but youth's own wisdom!" Then he lifts Giacinto tenderly upon his knee that he too may look out into the primrose sunset.

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